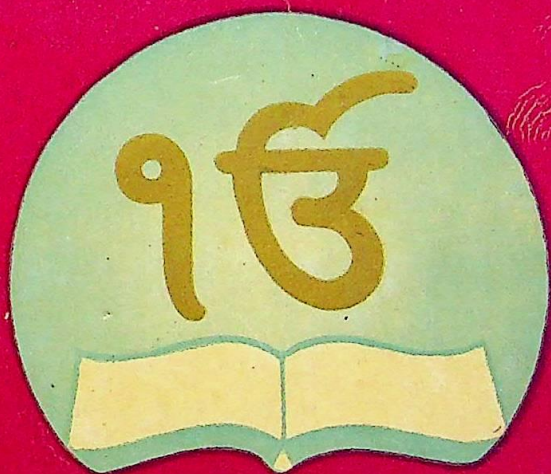


BELL BOOKS

SELECTIONS  
FROM THE  
**HOLY  
GRANTH**

A compilation of the basic writings of the Sikh faith



**Gurbachan Singh Talib**





Sikhism, a faith with millions of followers the world over, is still comparatively unknown to most people with regard to its principles and doctrines. *Selections from the Holy Granth* fills this gap by presenting the basic scriptural writings of the Sikh faith in an elegant English rendering. It also contains the compositions of some of the saints of medieval India, such as Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, and Farid.

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB is one of the foremost scholars of Sikhism, and has published a number of studies of the Sikh religion. He is at present Professor of Religious Studies at the Punjabi University, Patiala.







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BOOKS

# Selections from the Holy Granth

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

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Selections from the  
Holy Grah

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

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## Preface

Sikhism, a faith whose followers have achieved great distinction in several spheres, is still comparatively unknown to most people with regard to its principles and doctrines. A great deal of misunderstanding on this score exists. Indeed, the scholarly study of Sikhism was begun only recently, mainly in the universities.

In this context there has been a long-felt need for a handy book which should present to the general, lay reader interested in the study of this faith, a representative selection of its basic scriptural writings. English renderings from the *Adi Granth* (known popularly as the *Granth Sahib*), have been in existence for nearly a century, but most translations do not adequately convey to the uninitiated reader the original concepts or the power of what to the Sikhs is the divinely inspired word. To be conveyed are not only a number of philosophical concepts, integral to the Sikh faith and couched in the language of metaphor and symbol, but also the experience and emotion of the original. It is hoped that in the renderings that follow, these aims have been amply fulfilled.

Attention may be drawn to another feature of this book—the thematic arrangement of the hymns presented. While in Punjabi some selections with such an arrangement are extant, there is perhaps none in English. In the Punjabi selections referred to, the pieces presented are over-weighted on the conceptual side: the subtle appeal of Cosmic Wonder, the Ecstasy of Divine Love, the Transmutation of Suffering, the Joy of the Soul in God—all such aspects are left out. This translation to a very great extent cures this imbalance, and it is hoped will convey to the reader an adequate idea of the fullness and

richness of the spiritual experience and the universal ethical teachings of the Founders of the Sikh faith.

Apart from non-Sikh readers in India and abroad there are now among the Sikh people themselves, a class of adolescents and even middle-aged persons who under the stresses of present-day urban living, have lost touch with the fundamental principles and vision of their faith. To all such this book will bring the joyous message of the holy Gurus.

In the Footnotes and the Glossary, certain problems of interpretation have been dealt with. The introductory chapter sets down in fairly detailed outline the fundamentals of the Sikh faith along with brief notes about the teachers whose compositions are included in the *Holy Granth*.

The book is thus aimed at the general reader and the scholar seeking a deeper knowledge of Sikhism. I hope it will serve as a good and reliable introductory study of this faith.

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB



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## HOMAGE TO GURU NANAK

*The Bountiful Lord melted at the wail of suffering humanity,  
and sent Guru Nanak on to earth.*

*He set up the tradition of worship and reverence*

*And administered to disciples the amrita of the touch of his holy  
feet;*

*In the sinful Kali Age, he gave men the vision of the One  
Transcendent Brahm, All-Perfection;*

*He restored all four legs of Dharma, and rolled the four castes  
into one;*

*He made equal prince and pauper, and initiated all into humility;  
Strange are the ways of devotion, teaching humility and  
submission;*

*The Guru saved the Kali Age, uttering the syllable of the True  
Name.*

*Came Guru Nanak to save the Kali Age.*

(Bhai Gurdas, Var 1-23)

*In Sati-Yuga didst thou practise Supreme Yoga, and assuming  
Dwarf's form, didst defeat haughty Bali;  
In Treta again didst thou practise Supreme Yoga and wert called  
Rama, the Lord of the Raghu race;  
In Dwapar didst thou appear as Krishna, Slayer of Mura and  
didst slay Kamsa;  
And conferring Kingship on Ugrasen, didst render thy devotees  
fear-free;  
In Kali-Yuga wert thou verily Nanak, and didst assume the  
names Angad and Amar Das;  
Declared the Primal Purusha: The reign of the holy Guru shall  
be immutable, eternal.*

(The Bard Kala, Adi Granth, p. 1390)



*Granth Sahib—the Sikh scripture*

Granth Sahib, from which the selections in the following pages are presented in English rendering, is the sacred scripture of the Sikh faith. 'Granth' is from the Sanskrit, and like 'Bible' and 'Koran' implies a book. 'Sahib' added to its name (literally, Lord, master) represents the Sikh mode of expressing respect and veneration. This scripture was compiled and edited over a considerable period by the fifth Guru (apostle) of the Sikh faith, Arjan Dev, at Amritsar, and took final shape in 1604 when it was installed as the presiding holy Presence in Hari Mandir, the Sikh Temple, now popularly known as the Golden Temple. The Sikh faith being strictly monotheistic, this holy Book is so to say, the presiding deity of the temple, called Gurudwara (literally God's Portal). It represents the inspired or revealed Word of God, and all worshipers while entering the temple, bow to it, make to it offerings of money and sacred food, recite it to seek blessings and hear its pronouncements with deep faith. The Book is kept wrapped in silken or other valuable robes, is constantly waved over with a fly-whisk and installed under an ornate canopy. All in its presence must squat in the prayerful posture called in India padmasan (the lotus posture) and never sit on a bench or any elevated seat. All these are the distinctive marks of veneration shown to royalty. As a matter of fact, the assembly in a Sikh temple is known as darbar or court, and the mystic holy Presence referred to as Maharaj (Great King).

The Granth contains the sacred compositions, in the form of short pieces of poetry, of the Gurus of the Sikh faith, up to the time of Guru Arjan, its compiler. The compositions



of Guru Tegh Bahadur, ninth in the Sikh apostolic line, were added by command of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, a little after 1680. Besides these, it contains the compositions of some saints of medieval India, known in the Sikh tradition as bhaktas or devotees of God. These are drawn from several castes, including some considered untouchable. Two Muslim saints are also represented. Prominent among these bhaktas are Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, Jaidev, and Farid. The castes which these saints represent are significant, in view of the millennia-old Indian prejudice whereby none but a Brahmin may claim sanctity or the right to teach holy truths. Furthermore, as Muslims were to the non-Muslims in India in a way 'unclean', to have selected the hymns of two Muslims for inclusion in the holy Book was another indication by the Gurus of their universal, catholic outlook whereby spiritual truths were welcome from whatever source they came. This was a sure way to melt caste and other prejudices and to instil an attitude of tolerance among the people. As a matter of fact, the Granth was intended to be a kind of Peoples' Bible for the Indian humanity, a treasure house of lofty spiritual and moral teaching. A somewhat detailed exposition of the fundamentals of the teachings contained in the Granth Sahib will follow in the course of this study.

The contents of the Granth are in accordance with the ragas or classical Indian musical measures, headed by the principal among these, Sri Raga. At the opening are the three prayer-texts—*Japuji*, *Rahiras*, and *Kirtan Sohila*, which form the staple of the Sikh daily prayer. Like the rest of the contents of the holy Book, their themes are the spiritual vision of the Infinite, moral insights and expression of devotion to the Creator. The musical arrangement of the Granth is in accordance with the tradition of poetic compilations in medieval India. The compositions included in the Granth are for the most part hymns of devotion. There are a few

disquisitional texts and short poems of ethical exhortation and inspiration. Their order of arrangement is in accordance with the precedence of the holy authors. At the head in each case stand the compositions of Guru Nanak, the Founder of the faith, followed by those of his successors in historical sequence. These are again followed by the compositions of the bhaktas, preceded in all cases by Kabir, who is accorded pre-eminent among these holy men. The hymn collections are followed by some set texts, where available, and by Vars or composite disquisitional structures. Details of their literary characteristics would be a little out of place in a book not intended to be an advanced study of Sikh sacred literature.

The language of the Granth is partly Punjabi, the native language of the Punjab region, where all the Gurus were born and lived and carried on their mission. It alternates with medieval Hindi of the Braji variety, which had come to be adopted as the medium of philosophical-religious thought over the whole of northern India. Interspersed with these are some other dialects also, but their incidence is only occasional. The entire Book is written in the Gurmukhi script, which is the recognized script of the Punjabi language, and has a considerable volume of sacred and secular literature. The original draft (or as some think, the earliest copy thereof) is preserved as a jealously-guarded treasure in the family of one branch of the descendants of the Gurus at Kartarpur, near the town of Jullundur in Punjab.

#### *A brief history of the Sikh faith—Guru Nanak*

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith was born in a Hindu Khatri family of modest means in Punjab in 1469. The place of his birth, Talwandi, later known in his honour as Nankana Sahib is now in Pakistan. Guru Nanak's father was factor to the squire of the place, a Muslim Bhatti Rajput, Rai Bular by name. This man is said to have been among



the first to have perceived the God-inspired soul and the great teacher, as Guru Nanak was later to become. In his childhood Guru Nanak was of a withdrawn nature, contemplative and fond of religious company. His education at home must have been of the type available for the sons of the middle class Hindus of the day. It included book-keeping, Sanskrit, and Persian. From the company of wandering mystics Guru Nanak acquired a vast insight into the various systems of Indian philosophy, yoga and the principles of Islam. His own genius and the spiritual illumination that came to him from his long spells of meditation shaped the creed which he was to proclaim to the world and which became the foundation of the Sikh faith.

Guru Nanak's parents were anxious to set him up in some trade or occupation, so that he might become a prosperous man of the world. His detachment from the world and his spiritual absorption made them considerably unhappy. Some miracles are related touching his early life, though the Guru himself discounted the validity of the reputed possession of miraculous powers as proof of spiritual eminence or prophethood. His marriage was arranged in a prosperous family, probably when he was not yet twenty years of age, and two sons were born to him. But his detachment grew and he took little interest in the affairs of his family, to the great distress of his entire household. For some time he was given an appointment as store-keeper to the chief of Sultanpur, near present-day Kapurthala in Punjab. Here too his ways were rather those of one running a charitable institution than a strict man of business. It was during this period at Sultanpur that Divine revelation came to him as he went into the rivulet called Bein for his customary dip. His earliest biographers have symbolically represented this event as his being summoned at the Court Divine, where he was granted the revelation and invested with the Robe by the Divine Powers. Com-



ing out of the long trance into which the Guru had gone on this occasion, the first words which he uttered were: "There is no Hindu and no Mussalman." The meaning of this cryptic announcement was that humanity being all one, and all being the children of God, artificial divisions of creeds are false. Thus, implicit in the Guru's words and in his teaching all through was the gospel of love and humanitarianism.

With his vision of a religion that must reconcile rather than divide, and must emphasize the pure life rather than ritual and mystagogy of which there were thousands upon thousands of practitioners both within Hinduism and Islam, the Guru travelled over large areas of India. He also went outside its confines, into the remoter Himalayas, Afghanistan, and Iran, and reputedly to Baghdad and Mecca. Visiting the centres of Brahminical Hinduism of hatha yoga, Tantrism, Shaivism, Sufistic Islam, and various other creeds, he exhorted the teachers of religion and the masses everywhere to discard barren ritual and false shows of piety, and to concentrate on God-realization and to practise the widest humanitarianism. Truthful living and compassion were the virtues he held supreme. Within India, while he toured western Punjab, the Pathan areas and Sind which were Muslim, he visited great centres of Hinduism like Kurukshetra, Hardwar, Mathura, Benaras (Varanasi) from where he travelled along the Ganga into Bihar and Bengal. From there he penetrated into Orissa and Assam, two areas where Hinduism in its 'dark' varieties was particularly strong. He made detours into the Terai regions, into Central India and—according to some accounts—as far as the extreme South and Sri Lanka, then known as Lanka. There is nothing improbable about such an itinerary, as Guru Nanak is said to have spent some twenty-five to thirty years travelling and preaching.

His fame soon spread. Everywhere he went, Brahmins, Yogis, Vaishnavites, Tantrists, Muslim Sufis venerated him

and accepted the great truths enunciated by him. On a number of his journeys Guru Nanak was accompanied by a Muslim minstrel, Mardana. He sang on his rebeck the hymns of Divine devotion, blazing forth all over the country the Guru's words as a living proof of amity among faiths. In a number of places those who received his message, formed themselves into sangats or assemblies of brethren in faith and carried forward his great mission.

The Guru was, however, contrary to the generality of holy men and preachers of religion, not an advocate of total renunciation or a life of withdrawal from the concerns of the material world. Such an attitude he considered to be negative and barren, and particularly in the face of the overwhelming evil in the world, a kind of dereliction of duty by a man of God. No other saint of our country over the centuries had as comprehensive a vision of duty as Guru Nanak had. Rather than the life of the recluse, he commended the life of the householder. Rather than practice withdrawal from the world, he called upon all men to combat and end the evils and injustices under which humanity was groaning. He had the clear vision of a just society as the goal of a man of God. Denouncing the hypocrisy of the claimants to piety, and the corruption of those in places of power, he called upon all to tread the path of truth and justice. Worldly pomp and glory he saw as insubstantial bubbles, as also wealth which men seek to hoard through much practice of evil. Caste—the great source of injustice in our country—he repudiated and called upon men to judge others by their lives and deeds rather than by birth. This teaching, and particularly its synthesis with religion was truly revolutionary. Perhaps never before had the world heard such a message, and never had religion been made to assume such a fruitful role for the purity and fulfilment of human life as in this teaching.

Guru Nanak in his teaching addressed himself to a two-



fold though related task. In the first place, he defined the essence of the religious experience, as against the prevailing incrustations on it which had grown in all sects and denominations both within the vast world of Hinduism and in the world of Islam which by Guru Nanak's time had been established in India as a mass faith for over three centuries. Ritual, the external form and husk of religion, he taught was hollow, and if practised without true devotion and an earnest attempt at securing purity of heart, is only so much waste of human effort. Even when its practice is not hypocrisy, it is a deluded attempt at seeking what shall not come through it—enlightenment and liberation. Rather than ritual, which is different for different sects and hence dividing, he commended the universal spiritual processes of which the steps are constant prayer, meditation, and devotion.<sup>1</sup> These, pursued with sincerity of heart, lead to an uplifting of the soul which is the essence of the religious experience. For these processes the name which the Guru adopted and which is of such frequent occurrence in the Sikh Scripture, is *sahj*. This is the path of spiritual endeavour without the forcible and artificially adopted aids such as are prevalent in certain creeds, like acts of penance and self-mortification. This is true religion. Wherever the Guru went, he preached this.

In a great debate with the *siddha-yogis* the Guru's commendation of the path of *sahj* triumphed over the *yogis'* system of *hatha-yoga* with its paraphernalia of breathing regulations, its mystique of 'lotuses' and the arousing of *Kundalini* or *Shakti*. The arousing of the dormant *Kundalini* is believed to infuse into the practitioner not only supreme

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that Guru Nanak commended various forms of prayer prescribed by different creeds as of equal value in seeking Divine grace, provided the prayer issued from a sincere heart and was accompanied by a pure life.



enlightenment but also miraculous powers, called in the Indian tradition riddhis and siddhis. All such claims, while granting them true, Guru Nanak has discounted. In some of the devotional hymns reproduced in the following texts, he has given the prime place in religion to devotion to God, compared with which all attainment to supernatural powers is irrelevant and meaningless. Great miracles in the form of great achievement of human significance are performed by men of devotion. Devotion is supreme over all; it overcomes sorrow and suffering and brings to man's aid Divine grace which removes all obstacles that beset man's attainment of the inner peace. This state of poise, in which 'the wandering mind is stilled', and 'doubts are cast asunder' is true liberation. One who attains this is called *jivan-mukta*, that is, one 'released' while still living. This is the highest state attainable by man. In the Guru's teaching it is called *param-pad* (supreme state) *nirvana* (Release from the lower self) and *mokh-duvar* (door of Liberation) and by a number of other names. This state leads to the cessation of the painful cycle of birth and death, and man's involvement with desire, which is the source of all suffering.

So, it may be seen that Guru Nanak's emphasis in religion is basically ethical, in the more comprehensive sense. It is the pursuit of that state which transcends immoral thoughts and actions. Without the attainment of such a state, by the only method (*sahj*) possible for its attainment, all man's pursuit of religious practices are bound to remain fruitless. So, this cardinal point must be grasped in arriving at the true significance of Guru Nanak's teaching.

Morality in this higher and more comprehensive sense which lies at the core of Guru Nanak's teaching is, however, not an individualistic or self-regarding quality. Not the virtues whose influence spreads to the individual only, not those which touch the few immediate concerns of the family,

tribe or community—but those which embrace the good of the entire human race. The prayer of the Sikhs, offered twice daily, ends with these words:

*By grace of Nanak may the spirit  
ascend to ever greater heights;  
May general weal descend on all creation  
by God's grace!*

These words truly interpret the essence of Guru Nanak's teaching. The emphasis is on the welfare of all spheres of human life—including the individual, the family, the general community, and the state.

As evidence of this wide and comprehensive conception embodied in the teaching of the great apostles of the Sikh faith is their vision of a just society, which is not met with in oriental thinking in general. Of such a society, in India the conception is only partial and fragmented. The idea of justice has generally centred in the operations of the will of a benevolent autocrat, without visualizing alteration in the structure of the law governing the state and society, and with only superficial and peripheral criticism of obvious abuses of power. Hypocrisy of the priestly classes and corruption in high office have found an occasional voice of protest raised against these, but the basic structure from which injustice stems has been left unchallenged.

One of the abuses against which most saints raised their voice has been the arrogant assumption of holiness by the Brahmin in India.<sup>2</sup> This and the fact that some persons rising from the class of untouchables did attain sainthood and were accepted as such, was perhaps the most progressive line

<sup>2</sup> In Muslim society too, less frequently and rather in the spirit of raillery and banter, their kind of orthodox priest, the mullah, is decried.



of thought which found expression in our country during the long centuries of Muslim rule and in those preceding it. It did not of course, solve the problem of caste or untouchability, or shake the Brahminical dominance a whit, but it did indicate dissatisfaction with an institution which was buttressed by scriptural sanction and the claim of celestial authority. Through Guru Nanak's teaching a fuller picture of a just society emerges. Royalty, the aristocracy, the ruling orders, the holders of riches, the priestcraft, the mendicant claimants to holiness, are all castigated for their moral blindness and the injustice in which they all participated. This aspect of his teaching, which repeatedly figures in his pronouncements, makes him a prophet in the true sense of the word—one who visualized the morally rotten core of society, and sought to reconstruct it on an ethico-spiritual basis. Religion with him thus, was the way to a higher life for the individual and the community. Not only must men be truthful and pure, but the institutions which they raise must also be such. His penetrating vision found much wrong in religious ritual, in the monastic orders, in the divisions of sects and faiths, in the pomp of royalty, in the arrogant power of state officials and in those with vast hoards of wealth. All these were castigated by him, not in shrill tones, but in the spirit of compassion of one who had eyes to see, and visualized the dangerous abyss yawning below the vast concourse of humanity, waiting only for the inevitable push. The untouchables, the poor in general, women—all who had suffered injustice for ages—found a place in his compassion.

His vision also saw the law that urges on the dynamics of history as basically being the moral law. Those who have lived away from God, immorally and in indulgence, must one day fall under the weight of their own evil. Thus, he visualized in the ornate walls of luxurious mansions and in the handsome figures of men and women, the heaps of dust that they



must all one day be. In Babar's invasion of India he saw the fate that overtakes tyrants oblivious of the law of morality and compassion, which in the Indian tradition has been known as Dharma. Deeply moving are his swiftly executed pictures of ruin and havoc brought about by the victory-drunk soldiery of Babar, and the dishonour done to Indian womanhood, Muslim along with the Hindu. He is thus, also, our people's first prophet of nationhood, both in respect of his enunciating a philosophy of a just society and his all embracing compassion for all sections of our people.

For the individual, while Guru Nanak lays down the duty of prayer and devotion and the pursuit of enlightenment and liberation, he also does not shrink from calling upon him to wage a battle for justice when need arises. "In this street," he says alluding to the path of loving service, "step with thy head placed on thy palm." Elsewhere in an exhortation to heroic men not to shrink from martyrdom, he says: "Dying is not an evil: the death of heroic men is blessed, should they lay down their life in an approved cause." Kabir, many of whose pronouncements are close to Guru Nanak's in spirit, and who is the principal among the bhaktas of the holy Granth, says:

"The true hero is one who in defence of the helpless may be hacked limb by limb, but flees not the field."

Also of this temper were Namdev, Guru Arjan, and Guru Tegh Bahadur, whose pronouncements figure later in this book and whose teachings accord in all respects with Guru Nanak's.

It may be pointed out here that while the particular synthesis between the spiritual and temporal aspects of life is Guru Nanak's own revelation, other great religions in the history of mankind too have tended to commend a similar life-view. In particular the teachings of the Gita and the Koran in their more purely moral aspects could be compared with the life-pattern which has just been outlined. The differ-

ences between Guru Nanak's teaching on the one hand and those either of the Gita or the Koran cannot be brushed aside as insignificant, particularly after considering the historical background of each revelation. But in the particular aspect sought to be summed up here there are certain basic assumptions similar to each of them. These consist in the great vision whereby spiritual life is seen not only as a self-searching experience, but as a touchstone for life's daily activities and relationships, into which must be infused the insights gained in the course of the ascesis to attain enlightenment. Action is thus informed by life of the soul, what in the Gita has been called *jnan-agni-dagdha karma* (action purified in the flames of enlightenment). That is the significance of the phrase 'place of righteous action' (*dharma-sal*) that Guru Nanak has called the earth, man's abode, in *Japuji*. This idea and the synthesis consequent upon it are common to all the three religious traditions. Guru Nanak's conception of this synthesis occupies a unique place in the process of the evolution of man's search after a scheme of life that must satisfy the demands of the spirit without neglecting the compulsions of man's earthly existence. The force and vitality of this inspiration is borne out among other things, by the Sikh people, whose history is enlivened by innumerable examples of what the human spirit at the height of idealistic passion can achieve.

### *Basic beliefs—The devotional path*

The Sikh faith is strictly monotheistic. There is no mythology or angelology as in a number of popular religions of the world. No deities or divine persons, except God the highest, are worshiped. Such beings from the Indian religious tradition, do however, find mention in the compositions of the Gurus, but they are meant to be viewed only as symbols of certain aspects of the Divine power. Beyond this they find no mention or veneration. The names of certain 'incarnations'



from the Indian tradition, particularly Rama and the periphrastic expressions for Krishna, the most popular of the Indian gods, are however, in view of their familiarity among the masses, taken over as synonymous with the Supreme Being. The entire context and approach of the Gurus to the issue of the Godhead places the symbolic character of such names beyond any doubt.

For God, the Supreme Being, the holiest name in the Sikh creed is Ek Oankar. This is written in the Gurmukhi lettering with the numeral '1' followed by the nasal vowel for 'O', surmounted by an arc. Ek in many of the Indian languages stands for 'One', while Oankar is basically Om, extended to Omkar in the *Mundak Upanishad*. While Om also occurs in the Granth Sahib, its form as Oankar is adopted by preference. To emphasize the unity and indivisibility of God called Oankar, the numeral '1' is added to the formula. Thus formulated, the basic creed of the Sikh faith would signify 'the One Indivisible Supreme Being'. This name stands at the head of the holy Granth and is inscribed at the head of all sacred Sikh writings. It is inscribed to invoke Divine blessing and is enunciated solemnly by all new entrants to the Sikh faith at the time of initiation. This is a 'meaningful' credal formula, in contradistinction to the formulae of numerous medieval pseudo-mystical creeds. Its 'root formula' (called bij-mantra) is 'One' from which grows the entire living creed.

Ek Oankar forms the first syllable or verse of the Sikh creed, known as Mul Mantra (Basic Creed). Rendered in English it runs thus: 'In the name of the One Indivisible Supreme Being, Eternal Reality, Creator Purusha, without fear, without rancour, Timeless Form, Unborn, Self-Existent; Realized through Divine grace.' The qualities emphasized herein are unity, timelessness, the uncreated character, and indispensability of grace for God-realization. This last point is also essential, as in the teaching of the Sikh faith while



modes and forms of prayer are commended, these are not by themselves enough to achieve illumination of the soul. For that, grace must be earned through sincere, loving devotion, without which all efforts at prayer, all ascetic 'practices' will fail to emancipate the soul from the shackles of the lower self. Grace comes through devotion. Hence the path of devotion is commended as supremely valuable for God-realization. Says Guru Nanak in the *Japuji*, "Through good actions the human incarnation may be achieved; but liberation comes only by Divine grace."

Mul Mantra enunciates the transcendental, 'unattributed' vision of the Supreme Being. This in Indian philosophical thought is called Brahman (Brahm in popular form) and in English is usually rendered as the Absolute. Being 'unattributed', that is, unshackled in any manner, the Absolute is immutable, ineffable, and inaccessible by the finite human self. It is also formless (Nirakar), implying that no image or human artifact or incarnation can represent it. Hence, being a worshipper of this formless Absolute, Guru Nanak was given the appellation Nirankari (Nirankar being the popular form of Nirakar, the formless Absolute). While Mul Mantra avers faith in the attributeless formless Absolute, as the highest conception of the Godhead, in devotion and worship this Attributelessness is qualified in order to be comprehensible at all, even though only imperfectly, and to be the object of the devotee's love. To be loved, to be compassionate, to maintain the moral elan of the universe, whereby Evil inevitably must give way before Righteousness or Dharma—such are the attributes with which the Supreme Being must be invested, in order to be invoked as Bhakta-vatsal (Beloved of devotees) as He has been called constantly in devotional literature. The fact of personalizing the Supreme Being as one who is responsive to love and sensitive to the highest moral values, is to meet it half-way, so to say, for worship and devotion.

Not the 'three qualities' of Maya (tamas—darkness of mind; rajas—blind passion and sattva—intellect) but the highest qualities of love and morality must be postulated.

Some centuries before Guru Nanak's time, the South Indian bhaktas and earlier still, the *Gita* had enunciated the personalized principle of a Supreme Being that must be loved. This was, in these cases, worship of the 'attributed' which was also invested with form, as a deity or incarnation. The great sage Ramanuja, who brought the complement to Shankara's doctrine of non-duality involving attributelessness, postulated within non-duality (*advaita*) 'attributes' such as those to which worship is addressed. This modified form of *Advaita* has been called *Vishisht-advaita* (non-duality with attributes). Without insisting on the labels, it might still be claimed for Guru Nanak's total conception of the Supreme, that it is the 'personalized Formless'. Being personalized would necessarily involve having attributes. As one reads through the compositions of the Gurus and the bhaktas from the Granth Sahib, one comes upon the 'personalized' conception in almost every line of the Book, either apostrophized or delineated directly or invoked indirectly. This subtle doctrine which is peculiar to Indian religious thought, could be a stumbling block in the understanding of the Sikh faith for those unfamiliar with the Indian (and Sikh) metaphysical and theological concepts.

The teaching of the Gurus is permeated with the non-dualistic vision or monism, attainment of which is the highest goal of the religious life. To attain such vision is true liberation. At base such vision is also ethical, inasmuch as not merely its philosophical aspect, but its perfection in providing a basis for ideal conduct, is again and again stressed. All 'foul thinking' (*durmati*), as the opposite of such a vision is called, is the root of evil inclinations and evil-doing. The non-dualistic vision liberates the individual from the shackles of



egoism, which man is repeatedly warned against. With the non-dualistic vision, the ego visualizes itself as a part of the universal whole, and any distinctions of mine and thine must then vanish. Even the first step in the true religious ascent will reveal the beginning of the individual self's emancipation from egoism and its concomitant evil. For the God-instructed person the term employed by the Gurus is *Guru-mukh* (facing Godward) and the opposite term is *man-mukh* (facing egoward). Such terminology itself will reveal the firmly moral base of the system formulated by the Gurus.

The non-duality of the Gurus' conception is not essentially different from that associated with the great Shankara. In his clarifications Shankara postulated that phenomenon is not unreal; only to the seeker after the Highest it is of no consequence. To the Gurus also the world is 'real' in the obvious, material sense. The earth, as mentioned earlier, is the stage for the practice of righteousness. The dualist or materialist is not one who regards the world as real, but one to whom attachment to it or its lure has value. To take Shankara's great image of the Serpent and the Rope, which he derived from the Upanishad, with enlightenment (*jnan*, *vidya*) which is the awakening of the soul, all the values of the world become unreal. When this awakening has taken place, or in the Guru's phrase, "the inverted lotus-bowl of the mind is turned Godward" to be receptive of grace, all the individual's values undergo a transformation. Thus, the meaning of non-duality must be grasped to enter into the Gurus' teaching. Non-duality for them, as said earlier, is a spiritual-ethical concept, not merely a metaphysical one.

So also their conception of *Maya*, one of the best-known terms in Indian thought. To the generality of the Indian philosophers, *Maya* is the principle of mutability, without which the processes of phenomenal creation cannot take place. According to such a concept, *Maya* is a morally neutral

term, with a scientific kind of signification. To the Gurus, Maya is the veil, the scum over the surface of the pure sheet of water, the dust obscuring the surface of the mirror of the soul. Such imagery is common in their teaching, as also the constant warning against yielding to Maya, which is the source of distorted thinking and evil conduct. So, Maya, which is of such frequent occurrence in the Gurus' teaching, must be interpreted as indicated here, without its multiple associations in the systems of Indian philosophy.

The goal of life is release from the cycle of life and death. As mentioned earlier, the Supreme State (*parma-pad*) may be achieved also in the course of the physical existence by transcending the lower self. The unsurpassed peace and joy of this state is the theme of numerous passages in the *Granth Sahib*.

In Sikhism certain fundamental principles of Indian philosophical thought are accepted as axiomatic. Besides transmigration, the doctrine of 'three qualities' in Sankhya is accepted. The truly enlightened person is one who has transcended these qualities or *gunas* and entered into the 'fourth state' of *Turiya* or complete absorption into the Universal. This Yogic postulate, however, is to be interpreted again in ethical terms as the conditioning of the self so as inevitably to seek the path of righteousness. The moral anchor is nowhere abandoned and religious thought is nowhere allowed to ascend to the regions of nebulous experience as in some cults where all distinctions of right and wrong are obliterated. Nor is it, as in the case of the extreme forms of medieval Bhakti, allowed to become a mere expression of emotional abandon. Bhakti, in order to be of the approved variety, must through love view all existence as the object of loving service. Particularly repugnant to Sikh thought are the media for inducing ecstasy, such as drugs and spirituous liquors, or the states of abandon expressing themselves in erotic emotion-



alism or self-laceration in fits of induced masochism. Because of their divorce from the training of the will to habituate itself to egolessness, sacrifice and righteous action, all such expressions of cultic 'experience' are held taboo. The orgies which form the necessary accompaniments of certain 'dark' cults such as Tantrism, Saktism, and Satanism of the Indian variety are of course, severely condemned. One of the words exciting supreme contempt in the Guru's teaching is sakta, which epitomizes all that is evil, and may in English be rendered as 'misbeliever', 'reprobate' and by such other terms. Obviously, the Saktic cults prevalent over vast areas of India were viewed by Guru Nanak as the very antithesis of true religion, whose essence must centre in purity and morality.

Guru Nanak subjected to a severe examination the various kinds of religious practices, attitudes, and cultic traditions prevalent among the Indian people. Fanaticism and narrowness of all kinds, engendering hate for any section of humanity, he condemned as irreligion. "The two paths," that is, Hinduism and Islam, he said, "are one; and anyone holding the contrary view must burn in hell-fire." This statement made concession to neither variety of narrowness and bigotry.

Orthodoxy, even where practised sincerely, in the narrow bigoted sense, was condemned by Guru Nanak. Similarly, all ritual divorced from true devotion was regarded by him as hollow sham. The Brahmin's paraphernalia of ritual articles, fasts, holy baths; the Muslim's five prayers, Ramadan fast, and circumcision; the Yogi's matted hair, ochre robe and ashes-plastered limbs; the Bhakti devotees' dances and mimes—in none of these does religion lie. Without sincere devotion, egolessness and the heart's resolve to abjure the lure of the world, all such efforts are a waste and self-delusion.

Numerous texts testify to this line of teaching. While it is not impossible to find similar exhortation in the wisdom of some other Indian teachers, in Guru Nanak is found the

distinctive synthesis between the life of the spirit and the demands of the body. His teaching is therefore not lost in mere sentimentality and verbal inanities which cease to be effective when the particular emotional wave has spent itself. As a great interpreter of Sikh teaching, Bhai Gurdas has put it, to practice the faith of the Gurus is to taste the bare, 'unsalted rock'. That is, it is to pass through phases of experience and living where only faith and distant vision may sustain the seeker, without any kind of joy or pleasure which makes experience of life palatable for the ordinary person. In such a life all ritual ceases to have any meaning when divorced from living in the presence of God. Thus the essence of this teaching is centered in devotion and moral endeavour, which must be understood in order to arrive at the heart of Guru Nanak's vision.

*The sacred compositions of the Gurus and Bhaktas*

The compositions of the Gurus of which a large portion rendered in this book are from Guru Nanak, may be comprehended under the titles superimposed on the various sections of the selections to follow. This division has been made for the convenience of the reader not particularly familiar with the Sikh scripture. Meditation on the Supreme Being in the spirit of ecstasy, on the inevitability of the moral law and its ultimate triumph, on duty, on the distortions of the mind leading to evil, on man's need to seek grace through devotion, on resignation to the Divine will, on the essence of the religious experience and its relationship with the moral life—such and numerous others are the themes dealt with. The Granth Sahib is a vast treasure-house of spiritual inspiration, whose power can only be felt if studied in a spirit of reverence and self-surrender. There is the spirit of supreme thankfulness for Divine grace in which all sorrow is annulled; compassion which embraces all humanity, nay all



existence, in its cosmic sweep of enlightenment, and prayers ascending to the Highest to shower His mercy on all creation. There is besides, the experience of joy in God, moods of Bhakti in which the self luxuriates in the love of God beside rendering all earthly joys tasteless. All these themes, along with numerous others related to these, are expressed in great poetry whose structure is basically musical, and whose rhythm and language inspire the soul and lull the mind to peace. The words are in popular forms, with such philosophical admixture as might support a structure, a total scheme of the ethico-spiritual life for the individual. In comprehending this poetic structure there are, however, the difficulties of a language now tending to grow archaic, besides those of the idiom of a particular spiritual tradition and highly compact poetic structure, which quite often defy analysis.

To render such creations in the idiom of a language as different as English is no easy task. In the renderings that follow, an attempt has been made to strike a balance between interpretation and literal rendering. All along the footnotes point to the literal meaning and to the original structures with their allusions and imagery. Words and phrases added to the original text for effect or emphasis or for greater comprehension have been printed in italics. This is the generally adopted method of giving greater expressiveness to the translation, from the English Bible onwards. Such aids should, besides providing part of the flavour of the original, help in the comprehension of the original in the devotional idiom of the host language. This task bristles with difficulties and with possibilities of criticism, charitable or otherwise. It should be remembered that the original is oriental spiritual poetry of a period removed between four and five hundred years, and in one case, that of Farid, near upon eight hundred years, in dialects which though not dead, are growing archaic. To translate the compositions of such a nature into a language

whose idiom and usages are alien, is a task requiring not only a close comprehension of the original in depth, but the capacity to put it effectively into the mould of English without robbing the words of their devotional atmosphere.

Each piece in the text is introduced with the first line transliterated according to the current spelling of Indian words, without any attempt at classical purism. To each piece is appended information as to the musical measure under which it is entered in the Granth, the name of the author (Guru or bhakta) and the page of the Granth in its standard, printed editions. These details should render it easy for the reader seeking to extend his knowledge of this Scripture and of the Sikh faith.

#### *Note on the Gurus and Bhaktas*

*Guru Nanak* (1469-1539)—founder of the Sikh faith; the introduction contains an exhaustive essay on his teaching.

*Guru Angad* (1504-1552)—successor to Guru Nanak in the seat of Guruship or the apostolic office.

*Guru Amardas* (1479-1534)—third after Guru Nanak in the line of Guruship.

*Guru Ramdas* (1534-1581)—fourth in the line of Guruship, and founder of the sacred Pool around which grew the town of Amritsar.

*Guru Arjan* (1563-1606)—fifth in the line of Guruship, founder of Hari Mandir (also known as Golden Temple) at Amritsar, and author-compiler of the Granth Sahib (1604); martyred in 1606.

*Guru Tegh Bahadur* (1622-1675)—ninth in the line of Guruship, and father of Guru Gobind Singh; martyred at Delhi for upholding the principle of freedom of conscience.

*Kabir*—his life-span according to popular belief extended from 1398 to 1518; a Kori or weaver of Kashi (Varanasi), and hence a low-caste man; his powerful intellect and spiri-



tual insight has had a wide popular appeal and he shook the foundations of Brahminical orthodoxy in the north; his compositions in Avadhi Hindi are given a place of honour in the Granth Sahib.

*Ravidas*—a popular saint; contemporary of Kabir, also of Benaras (Varanasi); was a cobbler by caste, and hence an untouchable; his compositions too have been included in the Granth Sahib, because of their deep devotional tone and their assertion of the common humanity of all mankind, transcending distinctions of caste.

*Namdev*—(born 1270) was a saint from Pandharpur in Maharashtra; a dyer by caste, which is considered 'low' by the Hindu caste code; his deep humanity and mysticism are strongly marked; about 60 of his hymns have found a place in the Granth Sahib.

*Farid* (1173-1265)—a Muslim Sufi saint of Punjab; known by his famous appellation of Shakarganj (Treasury of Sugar); believed to be the first recorded poet of the Punjabi language. Farid's poetry has power and a deep mystical tone. The Gurus, in order to emphasize the principle of equality of all men, selected a few of his compositions to be included in the Granth Sahib.

*Kala*—one of the Bards whose compositions were included in the corpus of Sikh sacred literature by Guru Arjan, who compiled the Granth Sahib.

*Bhai Gurdas* (died 1636)—a great poet and savant, who attempted the earliest definitive exposition of the philosophical bases of the Sikh faith; said to have been the amanuensis who made the original draft of the Granth Sahib under instructions from Guru Arjan, who secluded himself along with Bhai Gurdas for a considerable period to accomplish the task of completing the Scripture; his poetry is classical in form and philosophical and devotional in import.

*Note on the use of the name 'Nanak' in the hymns and other sacred writings*

It might mystify the reader not acquainted with the Sikh sacred literature that all the Gurus have indicated in their compositions their name as 'Nanak'. This is because of the mystic Sikh doctrine according to which all the Gurus are one in spirit, and to look upon them as distinct would be heresy. In the Granth Sahib, they are indicated separately by a formula which would be rendered as 'The Bride of God'. Thus Guru Nanak would be indicated as 'The First Bride', Guru Amardas as 'The Third Bride', Guru Arjan as 'The Fifth Bride', and Guru Tegh Bahadur as 'The Ninth Bride'.



*Jit dar wasaih kawan dar kahiyai*  
*Daran bhitar dar kawan lahai*

What is that door where He abides?  
 What the door?  
 Who will point to me the door  
 Which I have sought and sought with heart from the world  
     turned away?  
 How to cross over this ocean?<sup>1</sup>  
 How to die to the world?<sup>2</sup>  
 Of human life suffering is the door, violence the keeper;  
 The panels of hope and anxiety;  
 Maya the water-filled moat:  
 In this house of life founded on water,  
 Man may find poise seated on Truth alone.

His innumerable names reveal not His extent—  
 None His peer.  
 Not for man to brag;  
 In humility<sup>3</sup> must he abide.  
 God wills since He knows best.  
 Beset by hope and fear, how may man meditate on God?<sup>4</sup>  
 Saith Nanak: Union with God shall come about  
 Only when man discards desire for worldly gain.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The ocean of worldliness. This imagery is integral to the Gurus' teaching as also to Indian spiritual thought in general.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, die while living.

<sup>3</sup>Implies also restraint.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, the One without a second.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, may abide without expectation of fulfilment (of. Gita)

Thus may the ocean be crossed;  
Thus may man die to the world.

(*Raga Ramkali, Guru Nanak, p. 877*)

*Tun jalnidhi ham meen tumhare*

Thou the ocean, we are like fishes disporting in Thee;  
Thy Namè the holy drop, we are like the thirsty *chatrika*;<sup>1</sup>  
All my desire<sup>2</sup> is for Thee.  
To Thee is my heart devoted,  
As the child is filled after sucking milk;  
As the indigent man finds joy in the sight of wealth;  
As the thirsty man is cooled by a draught of water—  
So is my heart in love with the Lord.  
As is the lamp's glow in the dark,  
As is the joy of the spouse's memory to the wife,  
As is the joy of union with the beloved—  
So is my heart dyed in the Lord's love.  
God's devotees showed me God's path;  
The gracious Master<sup>3</sup> aroused in me devotion to the Lord:  
The Lord is mine, I His slave—  
On Nanak, the Master has conferred the holy Word of God..

(*Raga Majh, Guru Arjan, p. 100*)

*Uae jo deezseh ambar tare*

These stars visible in the sky—  
Who the Painter that painted them?

<sup>1</sup>A tiny bird reputed to thirst after a particular drop of rainwater.

<sup>2</sup>Lit : Thirst.

<sup>3</sup>Reference to his predecessor in the holy seat of Guruship, Guru Ramdas..



Thou Pundit!<sup>1</sup> answer, what support holds the sky?  
 Only one endowed with Divine wisdom<sup>2</sup> may know this.  
 The sun and moon whose light is spread all around—  
 These too are manifestations of the Supreme.<sup>3</sup>  
 Saith Kabir: This great truth may alone be realized by one  
 In whose mind abides God,  
 And whose tongue ever utters His Name.

(Raga Gauri, Kabir, p. 329)

*Bazigar jaise bazi pae*

As the juggler enacts his show—  
 And exhibits tricks of various forms;  
 Then removing his disguise he gathers up his exhibition;  
 So too when creation is gathered up,  
 Remains solely the Supreme.<sup>4</sup>  
 How many the forms made visible and demolished!  
 Where are they gone? Where did they come from?  
 Innumerable waves arise from the water;  
 Many are the ornaments made from gold;  
 Numerous are the forms in which the seed sprouts:  
 When the fruit ripens,  
 The Supreme reappears.  
 In so many vessels of water the very same sky is reflected;  
 As the vessel is broken, the same Light remains.  
 While doubt, avarice, delusion last,  
 Evils of Maya dominate the mind:  
 When doubt is dispelled,

<sup>1</sup>The usual form of address to a Brahmin reputedly learned in divinity.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, one fortunate, i.e. fortunately endowed with Divine wisdom.

<sup>3</sup>Original, Brahm (Brahman).

<sup>4</sup>Original, *Ek Oankar* (The One Indivisible Supreme Being).

The self sees only the Supreme.  
He is eternal, and knows not destruction.  
Nothing is born; nothing ever dies.<sup>1</sup>  
The perfect Master has removed the filth of my egoism;  
With this, saith Nanak,  
Have I attained the supreme state.

(*Raga Suhi, Guru Arjan, p. 736*)

*Ap akhara painda piara kar vekhai ap chojaha*

The Lord created the universal arena and  
Himself performed His play;  
Himself He created the child-hero Krishna  
And struck down Chandur and Kamsa<sup>2</sup> by the hair.  
Assuming might, the Beloved Lord has smashed the might of  
intoxicated brutes.<sup>3</sup>  
The Lord created the universe, Himself holds it on the leash,  
And pulls it about as He wills.  
Thus declares Nanak:  
The arrogant shall be destroyed;  
Those contemplating the Lord shall merge in Him.

(*Raga Sorath, Guru Ramdas, p. 606-607, Abridged*)

*Jeta sabda-surati dhun teti jeta roop kaiya teri*

All sounds, all meditation, absorption in Divine manifestation  
Emanate from Thee;

<sup>1</sup>All creation abides in the Supreme. Hence life and death are illusions.

<sup>2</sup>Names of two tyrants destroyed by Krishna.

<sup>3</sup>Original, Senseless barbarians.



All that strikes the vision is Thy form.  
 Thine the senses<sup>1</sup> enjoying all creation—  
 None other is there, mother dear!  
 One without a second is my Master:  
 One and sole Reality.  
 He the Destroyer, the Preserver, the Dispenser of all gifts.  
 Himself He views creation, joys in it,  
 Showers grace on all.

(Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 350)

*Varna roop vartaih sabh tere*

All hues, forms, are Thy manifestation;  
 These die, are born again—  
 Many the cycles in which they wander.  
 Thou alone immutable, inaccessible, immeasurable;  
 By divine wisdom alone mayst Thou be realized.  
 May I be a sacrifice again and again to any  
 In whose mind God's Name is lodged,  
 God without form, feature, hue—  
 By divine wisdom alone realized.  
 Should one know all existence to be manifestation of One  
 Effulgence,  
 Through devotion to the Lord will it become visible to him.  
 God's Presence, secret and manifest, is everywhere—  
 The seeker's light merges into His light.  
 The world is burning in the fire of desire,<sup>2</sup>  
 Of greed, pride and egoism:  
 Those cherishing such evils die and are reborn,  
 Dishonoured at the Court Divine,

<sup>1</sup>Literally, Himself He tastes and enjoys the fragrance.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, thirst.

Wasting their human incarnation.  
Rare is the man who realizes the Divine Word;  
One suppressing his ego learns the mystery of the universe;<sup>1</sup>  
Never does he die or be born.  
By meditating<sup>2</sup> on God is he merged in holy Truth.  
Let man devote himself to the Eternal,  
Not any other.  
Such devotion brings eternal joy.  
Saith Nanak: Those dyed in the Name are the truly wise;  
Holy all their endeavour.  
(*Raga Majh, Guru Amardas, p. 120-121, Abridged*)

*Tun ped sakh teri phooli*

Thou art the tree;  
All that is, is Thy flourishing branches.  
From subtle didst Thou become palpable.  
Thou the ocean, foam and bubbles—  
All that is visible, is Thy self.  
Thou the string and the jewels:  
Thou the knot, the principal bead.  
In the beginning, middle and end is the Lord—  
Nothing else exists.<sup>3</sup>  
Thou the Unattributed and Attributed;  
Thou the source of all joy.  
Untrammelled Thou, yet all joys inhere in Thee.  
Thy might<sup>4</sup> known to Thee only;  
No thought can enter into Thy mystery.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, the three worlds.

<sup>2</sup>Original, sahj. Sahj is the path of meditation and realization in contra-distinction to ritual and *praxis*.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, is visible.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, acts, doings.



Thou the Lord and the servitor;  
 Thou art manifest and unmanifest.<sup>1</sup>  
 Nanak, Thy servant chants ever Thy praise:  
 Cast Thy glance of grace on him for one instant.

(*Raga Majh, Guru Arjan, p. 102*)

*Awwal Allah noor upaiya kudrat ke sabh bande*

In the beginning Allah<sup>2</sup> created the Light;<sup>3</sup>  
 His might has created all.  
 The entire universe is created from that One Light:  
 Who then is pure and who impure?<sup>4</sup>  
 Brother, fall not into the delusion made by man:  
 The Creator is in the creation; in creation is He—  
 He pervades the universe.<sup>5</sup>  
 From one clay, in various forms  
 Has He made all creation.  
 Neither is any pot<sup>6</sup> of clay faulty, nor the Potter.  
 The Eternal abides in all;  
 All happens as He wills.  
 One who realizes the Divine Ordinance,  
 And knows God to be One without a second—  
 Such a one alone is His true servant.  
 Allah and Alakh is incompassable—

<sup>1</sup>Order of epithets transposed in the rendering.

<sup>2</sup>Allah is the orthodox Muslim name for God. Its use like *Alakh* towards the close which comes from the Indian (Hindu) tradition is intended to evoke the mystic vision of Reality and to instil tolerance.

<sup>3</sup>This 'Light' is the mystic universal soul, the Supreme Self.

<sup>4</sup>The implication is, high and low, as well as 'pure' and 'impure' into which orthodoxy divides mankind.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, all space.

<sup>6</sup>Implies of course, the human creature.

This inexpressible truth has the Master taught me.<sup>1</sup>  
Saith Kabir: On realizing this my doubts have vanished,  
And I have had sight of the all-pervading Immaculate Reality.  
(*Raga Prabhati, Kabir, p. 1349*)

*Kup bhariyo jaise dadra des bides na boojh*

As is a well full of frogs,  
Ignorant of the wide world,<sup>2</sup>  
So is my mind deluded by evil passions,  
Keeping out all thought of the Beyond.  
Lord of all universes!<sup>3</sup> show me for one instant a sight of  
Thee.

Lord!<sup>4</sup> my senses have been fouled;  
Thy state I cannot encompass.  
Shower on me Thy grace;  
Remove my delusions; confer on me true wisdom.  
Great yogis<sup>5</sup> for all their praxis  
Comprehend not thy Reality<sup>6</sup> inexpressible.  
Through love and devotion mayst Thou be known—  
Thus saith Ravidas the cobbler.  
(*Raga Gauri Purabi, Ravidas, p. 346*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, has given me to taste of the sweet substance whose taste is inexpressible i.e. the mystic experience which defies utterance.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, one's own and alien lands.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, mansions.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Madhava.

<sup>5</sup>Original, *yogeshwar* (*jogisher*).

<sup>6</sup>Literally, qualities.



*Taruvar pankhi bahu nisi wasa*

This world is like a tree;  
 On it rest at night vast numbers of birds.  
 These birds live through pleasure and suffering,  
 And gripped by Maya's stupor in the end die.  
 As night passes and day dawns they again fly skyward;  
 Wandering in all directions as their actions<sup>1</sup> impel them.  
 (*Raga Gauri, Guru Nanak, p. 152-53*)

*Achraj katha maha anup*

Wonderful, unparalleled is the tale of the self—  
 It is made in the image of the Supreme:  
 Neither is it old nor young;  
 Neither has it suffering nor falls into Yama's snare;  
 Damage nor death grips it;  
 Ever and eternally is it absorbed in God.  
 Neither heat nor cold oppresses it;  
 Neither has it foe nor friend;  
 Neither joy nor sorrow touches it.  
 All is in its possession; all within its power.  
 Neither has it father nor mother;  
 Transcendent has it ever been.  
 Neither good nor evil stains it;  
 Ever is it awake in each being.<sup>2</sup>  
 By Maya-power wrapped in the three qualities is it born;  
 Mighty Maya is only its shadow;  
 The Supreme is beyond illusion,  
 Indestructible, ineffable, gracious,

<sup>1</sup>The implication is the accumulated force of actions of previous births.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, vessel.

Cherisher of the humble, ever merciful—  
His extent nothing can measure.  
May Nanak be a sacrifice to Him!

(*Raga Gaund, Guru Arjan, p. 868-69*)

*Devatiyan darshan kai taen dookh bhookh tirath kiyai*

For a sight of Thee the gods themselves have done penance,  
Kept fasts and performed ablutions;  
Yogis have practised austerities, and adopted ochre robes.  
For Thee, Lord, are all seekers dyed in devotion.  
Innumerable Thy names, countless Thy forms, inexpressible  
Thy attributes.

Thy devotees questing after Thee, have renounced home,  
Mansions luxurious, elephants and chargers,  
And sojourned into strange lands.  
Saints and prophets, seekers and devotees—  
Such have renounced the world and met with Thy acceptance.  
They renounced pleasures, comfort, joys of the palate;  
Gave up clothing and wrapped themselves in hides.  
Ever restless, making agonized search for Thy Portal,  
They dyed themselves in Thy name, and trod the hermit's  
path.

Various are the garbs adopted by those seeking Thee:  
Some wear hides; hermit-like, some hold the begging-bowl;  
Some carry the staff; some go wrapped in deer-skins;  
Others grow the tuft-knot, adopt the thread or the dhoti:<sup>1</sup>  
Nanak is Thy seeker ever, whatever his wear;  
He supplicates Thy grace alone:

What worth adopting the various caste symbols?

(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 358*)

<sup>1</sup>An unstitched cloth worn round the waist in India.



*Oankar Brahma utpati*

By Oankar was created Brahma,  
 Who forever on Oankar meditates;  
 By Oankar were created the mountains and the aeons;  
 By Oankar were created the Vedas.  
 Meditating on Oankar brings release;  
 By Oankar are the faithful saved.  
 Contemplate thou man, the exposition of the syllable Onum.<sup>1</sup>  
 In the syllable Onum are epitomized the three worlds.  
 What rigmarole art thou writing, Pundit!  
 Write, if thou must, the name of God—the holy, the  
 Cherisher.<sup>2</sup>

(*Ramkali Dakhani Oankar, Guru Nanak, p. 929-30*)

*Kaun taraji kaun tula tera kaun saraf bulawan*

What are the scales and who the weighman,  
 Who the gold-tester to comprehend Thee?  
 Where is the Preceptor to whom I may supplicate for  
 initiation?  
 Lord! Who may measure Thy worth?  
 Beloved mine, what know I of Thy extent?  
 Thou fillest the oceans and the continents with Thy Presence.  
 Thou mayst be valued in the scales of the mind, by the  
 weighman soul;  
 Devotion to Thee the gold-tester;  
 After weighing the Beloved in the heart, my mind may find  
 rest.

<sup>1</sup>Stands for Om, the mystical syllable.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Gopal.

He alone is the scales and balance; He alone the weighman;  
 He alone the buyer and seller; He the sole merchant;  
 Sealed in the blindness of ignorance,  
 Among lowest of the lowly, and stranger to Him,  
 Shaken by every whiff of desire—  
 Such is Nanak's company—how may he in his stubborn  
 ignorance find the Lord?

*(Raga Suhi, Guru Nanak, p. 730)*

*Tu dariyao dana bina main machhuli kaise ant lahan*

Thou art the ocean, all-knowing, all-seeing:  
 How may I a mere fish, know Thy extent?  
 Wherever I behold, Thou art present—  
 Leaving Thee is to me death.

I know not the fisher nor the net:

In suffering I meditate on Thee alone—

Thee who art all-pervasive

I took to be far.

Yet are all my doings within Thy sight.

What Thou seest I in hardihood deny—

Deny also Thy works and Thy Name.

All my sustenance is from Thee;

No other door for me to knock.

Before Thee Nanak lays this prayer:

My life and body all is Thine;

Thou art near and far and all around.

All sight and hearing is Thine.

By Thy might is this universe made.

Saith Nanak: Whatever is in Thy will contents me.

*(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 25)*



*Gaganmai thal ravi chand deepak tarika-mandal janakmoti*

Placed on the salver of heaven are the lamps sun and moon,  
With bright pearls of constellations—

Thy offering:

Fragrant mountain breezes Thy incense, the wind Thy fan  
The entire blossoming vegetation Thy flower offerings;  
Wonderful is this Arati,<sup>1</sup> of the entire creation to Thee,  
Thou Annuler of transmigration.

Divine spiritual harmony

Orchestrates Thy worship!

Thousands Thy eyes, Thy shapes,

Yet invisible art Thou ever.

Thousands Thy lotus feet; of thousand waves Thy wafted  
fragrance;

Yet invisible, wonderful Thy essence!

Thy light in all creation—Thou who art Light!

Thy effulgence illuminating the visible universe!

The Lord's Word alone makes manifest the light!

Submission to Thy will the highest prayer!

My soul yearns for the touch of Thy fragrant lotus-feet,  
In thirst unquenchable.

Bestow on the *chatrik* Nanak the water of Thy bounty:

In Thy Name grant him endless abode!

(*Raga Dhanasari, Guru Nanak, p. 663*)

*Koi bolai Rama Rama koi Khudai*

One calls Him Ram, another Khuda;<sup>2</sup>

Some call him Gosain, some Allah.

<sup>1</sup>Prayer offering.

<sup>2</sup>In this line are given the Muslim and Hindu names for God.

He is all-powerful, bountiful, beneficent and merciful.  
Some go to Hindu bathing places; some to Mecca;<sup>1</sup>  
Some perform the Hindu ritual of worship,  
Others bow down in namaz.  
Some read the Vedas; others the Koran;  
Some wear blue,<sup>2</sup> others white.  
Some are called Turk,<sup>3</sup> others Hindu.  
Some covet bishisht,<sup>4</sup> some swarga.<sup>5</sup>  
Saith Nanak: he who has understood God's commandment  
Alone knows His ways.

(*Raga Ramkali, Guru Arjan, p. 885*)

*Ek anek biyapak purak jat dekhon tat soi*

The One is manifest in innumerable forms:  
He alone is wherever I look.  
The alluring forms of Maya perplex man's understanding;  
Only the rare souls realize this.  
All that exists is the Lord—the Lord alone;  
Nothing exists but Govinda;  
Out of a load of thread is spread the complicated warp and  
woof.  
Waves, foam and bubbles—none is separate from the water.  
All this manifestation is the play of transcendent Brahm;  
Nothing else exists.  
What is only illusory and dream-like, man takes to be real;  
True thinking comes only from the Preceptor's teaching—  
On waking from its stupor, my mind apprehended the truth.

<sup>1</sup>Original, Haj pilgrimage.

<sup>2</sup>Blue would be the Muslim wear, white the Hindu.

<sup>3</sup>Here synonymous with Muslim.

<sup>4</sup>The Muslim paradise.

<sup>5</sup>The Hindu heaven.



Saith Namdev: see God's creation with mind awakened:  
In all creatures lives the Lord alone.

(*Raga Asa, Namdev, p. 485*)

*Pindhi ubhakle samsara*

Beings travel up and down existence like pots on the persian-wheel;

Wandering on the round of existence have I come at last to  
Thy door:

Who art thou?

I, Sire! Nama!

Master!

Save me from this house of Maya, leading to Yama!

Lord, Thy way is to uplift the fallen!

Praised be the saints who meditate on Hari, my Master!

On my forehead is pasted the dust of the Master's feet,

That is unattainable to gods, men and saints.

The Lord, shatterer of arrogance, is compassionate towards  
the humble.

Nama is a sacrifice to the protection of Thy holy feet.

(*Raga Dhanasari, Namdev, p. 693-94*)

*Mana maingal sakat dewana*

The mind is a wild elephant,  
Wandering bewildered in the forest of Maya delusion.  
Worldly objects<sup>1</sup> drive him about.  
By the Preceptor's teaching he, however, may seek his true  
home.<sup>2</sup>  
Without the discipline of the Preceptor's word the mind finds  
no rest:  
Devote yourselves to the immaculate name of God;  
Discard bitter-tasting egoism!

The mind, thoughtless, how may it be restrained?  
Unless it realize the Truth, Yama's chastisement it must  
endure.  
The Master is Himself liberator and maker of union with  
Himself,  
Destroyer of the torment of death and upholder of Right.

In the mind reside holy action, righteousness,  
Created though it is of the five elements.  
The mind is misbelieving<sup>3</sup>, avaricious, thoughtless:  
But devotion renders it lovely.  
By the Preceptor's teaching the mind may find poise;  
By the Preceptor's teaching it may realize truth of the three  
worlds.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, time, circumstance.

<sup>2</sup>That is, resting in God.

<sup>3</sup>Original, Sakta (in the first line too the same word occurs).

<sup>4</sup>That is, the esoteric secrets of the universe.



Then may the mind turn yogi, householder, ascetic,  
 And by the Preceptor's teaching contemplate the Lord.  
 By discarding egoism the mind may renounce the world,  
 And duality and desire that cling to all creation.  
 By the Preceptor's teaching it may taste the elixir of God's  
 Name;  
 Thus may God, Lord of the universal Mansion and Portal  
 confer honour on it.

The mind is also king, heroic in battle:  
 Should it turn towards God's name it is rendered fearless;  
 It has power to defeat<sup>1</sup> the five evils and subdue them;  
 By consuming egoism, it may imprison<sup>2</sup> them.

Through joy in God all other tastes may be discarded;  
 By turning to God one may be awakened to devotion.  
 By listening to the mystical music<sup>3</sup> of God,  
 The mind may contemplate the holy Word.  
 Through self-search one may become a devotee of the  
 Formless.

On entering the Divine Portal and Mansion the mind is  
 purified;  
 By turning to God one is attuned to Divine music;  
 Then day and night, by Divine grace one chants praise of  
 God—  
 Of God who abides in each being and is primal, eternal.  
 Thus the mind may get drunk with the Divine elixir;  
 By turning to God it may learn the secret of the universal  
 cure.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, kill.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, gather at one spot.

<sup>3</sup>Original, Anhad (anahata).

<sup>4</sup>Cure for the spiritual malady is meant.

To acquire devotion must one sit at the Preceptor's feet.  
Nanak considers himself a servant of the servants of God.  
(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 415-16*)

*Sun baware tun kaen dukh bhulana*

Listen, thou deluded<sup>1</sup> man!  
What is it that has ravished thy senses?<sup>2</sup>  
Listen, deluded man!  
Thy love is false; to the frail dye of Kasumbha<sup>3</sup> art thou  
attached.  
Thou art ravished by this false show, whose worth is not  
half a cowrie—  
God's Name alone gives the fast dye.  
By contemplating the great Word of God  
Shalt Thou dye red, vermillion.<sup>4</sup>  
In love of what is unreal,  
In this attachment art thou absorbed;  
With what is false art thou involved.  
The humble Nanak seeks shelter with the Ocean of Grace:  
Protect Thy devotee's honour!  
Listen, thou deluded man!  
Why this false pride?

Listen, deluded man!  
All pride and self-esteem shall one day depart.  
All that is, shall vanish;  
All pride is false—

<sup>1</sup>Literally, mad man.

<sup>2</sup>The literal sense would be—what is it that has deluded thee?

<sup>3</sup>Kasumbha is a flower whose dye is frail, easily washed away.

<sup>4</sup>Both colours symbolize the glow of joy in God.



Submit thy mind to God's devotees.<sup>1</sup>  
 Should destiny<sup>2</sup> decree,  
 One may die<sup>3</sup> while alive—  
 Thus cross the ocean of worldliness.  
 Those whom God calls to His contemplation,  
 Serve the holy Preceptor and quaff amrita.  
 Nanak seeks shelter at the Divine Portal.  
 His prayer is: May I be a sacrifice to God ever and ever!<sup>4</sup>  
*(Raga Suhi, Guru Arjan, p. 777 Abridged)*

*Mansa manahi smaile bhaujal sach tarna*

By subduing desire the ocean of worldliness may be crossed:  
 Lord primal and eternal, compassionate!  
 Nanak seeks shelter with Thee.  
 Thou the Bestower, we the seekers:  
 Grant us a sight of Thee.  
 The mind's mansion is filled with Divine joy  
 By contemplating God through His grace.  
 Discarding false avarice, one may realize the truth of God;  
 By absorption in the Divine word one may learn to know the  
 Supreme God.  
 The mind is an avaricious king, ever pursuing attractions:  
 By turning to God this avarice is discarded,  
 And one is in tune with Him.  
 By sowing in alkaline soil what profit?  
 The egoist loves not truth,  
 And keeps stuck up in falsehood.  
 Ye of no vision! discard avarice—

<sup>1</sup>Literally, turn to the servants (disciples) of God.

<sup>2</sup>'Destiny' here is not arbitrary determinism, but merit 'earned'.

<sup>3</sup>That is, be dead to the world.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, a hundred times.

Avarice the source of great torment.  
Should the holy Master be lodged in the mind,  
The poison of egoism is thrown off.<sup>1</sup>  
Brother, give up the evil path of Duality:  
Along this path you may be robbed.  
Laud the name of God day and night,  
And seek shelter with the holy Preceptor.  
The egoist is a stone, a rock,<sup>2</sup>  
Shame on his joyless existence:  
He is like the stone, which never will soak in water.  
God's name is a treasure, granted by the Perfect Master.  
Saith Nanak: To keep in mind ever the Name  
Is to quaff amrita churned<sup>3</sup> out of the ocean.  
(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 419*)

*Bikh bohitha ladiya diya samund majhar*

Man's life is a poison-laden ship, tossed into the sea;  
Of this sea the shore is invisible, this side or the other:  
Neither has it a rowing pole, nor is a pilot visible  
In this terrible vast sea.  
Friend,<sup>4</sup> the world is caught in a mighty net;  
Only by Divine grace and meditating on the holy Name,  
May man survive.<sup>5</sup>  
God is the ship, the holy Word the pilot.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, is destroyed.

<sup>2</sup>Imperviousness to the nobler impulses is implied.

<sup>3</sup>The reference is to the Puranic myth of the churning of the ocean by the gods and demons, and the emergence of the 'fourteen jewels' therefrom, including amrita.

<sup>4</sup>Original, 'Baba!' An honorific form of address for persons held in esteem.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, swim (not sink).



Where God's Word is, neither wind nor fire, nor waves,  
 Nor any frightful forms have power:  
 There the holy eternal Name alone abides,  
 Which carries man across the ocean of worldliness.  
 Those going ever it, by divine grace win the other shore,  
 Engrossed in devotion to the Eternal;  
 Their transmigration is ended,  
 Their light is merged into the light of the Infinite.  
 Through divine guidance comes realization,<sup>1</sup>  
 And the self merges into the Eternal.  
 A snake enclosed in a basket<sup>2</sup> will still carry poison and evil  
 in its nature:  
 What is destined for it from the primal hour may not be  
 averted—  
 On whom may the blame be cast?  
 By divine grace is found the antidote to such poison—  
 Such antidote is to put faith in the Name  
 And to seek contentment.  
 Should one catch a crocodile on the hook and line,  
 Its foul nature however caught, will not go—  
 One catching it will only regret his pains.  
 By misdirected efforts transmigration will not end,  
 Nor may destiny<sup>3</sup> be effaced.  
 God has created also the poison of egoism;  
 By lodging the Name in the soul may this poison be  
 eliminated.  
 Age shall not be a torment  
 To one who lives a pure life of devotion to God.  
 He whose egoism has been shed,  
 Is a jivan-mukta.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Original, Sahj (see Introduction).

<sup>2</sup>As Indian snake-charmers do.

<sup>3</sup>Destiny made by one's own actions is meant.

<sup>4</sup>For Jivan-Mukta see Introduction and Glossary.

The world is bound in selfish pursuit,  
And contemplates not holy truth;  
The stupid, benighted egoist has forgotten<sup>1</sup> transmigration:  
Only those on whom God's grace falls swim across  
Through contemplating the holy Word.  
The parrot<sup>2</sup> enclosed in the cage of divine love utters  
approved things;  
It picks up the grain of truth, sips amrita  
And flies off once only.<sup>3</sup>  
Through the Preceptor's touch and God-realization  
Is the door of liberation attained.

(*Raga Maru, Guru Nanak, p. 1009-10*)

*Kacha dhan sanchai murakh gawar*

The deluded fool hoards worthless<sup>4</sup> pelf,  
Being egoist, strayed from the truth Path, blind and  
thoughtless.  
This poisonous wealth brings always suffering—  
Neither does it last in death, nor brings good in life.  
The lasting wealth is obtained through submitting to the  
Preceptor—  
This false wealth only comes and goes.  
The egoist strayed from truth, thoughtless, meets death,<sup>5</sup>  
Sunk in the ocean of worldliness, unable to find the shore.  
Only through supreme good luck is the true Preceptor found;  
Those finding him are dyed in truth,  
And day and night practice renunciation.

<sup>1</sup>That is, that egoism leads to the suffering of transmigration.

<sup>2</sup>Image for the soul.

<sup>3</sup>That is, its transmigration is ended.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, unbaked, fragile.

<sup>5</sup>(Spiritual death; involvement in transmigration).



The true Word is the real amrita in all four ages;<sup>1</sup>  
 The truly fortunate alone are absorbed in God's Name.  
 This state the siddhas<sup>2</sup> and practitioners of yoga<sup>3</sup> crave for—  
 Only by good fortune is it attained.  
 All that exists is God: He is the Supreme Holiness.  
 Rare is the man who realizes the Supreme Being.<sup>4</sup>  
 God is the truth; Himself He induces devotion.  
 Saith Nanak: He watches over all;  
 Himself He arouses devotion to the Truth.

(*Raga Dhanasari, Guru Amardas, p. 665-66*)

*Bahut darb kar mana na aghana*

Excess of wealth satisfies not the mind;  
 Nor comes fulfilment from excessive indulgence<sup>5</sup> with beauty.  
 Man is involved in child and wife, taking these to be his:  
 These are all mortal, and turn to heaps of ashes.  
 Those without devotion to God are seen wailing:  
 Cursed are the persons and cursed the wealth of those  
 involved<sup>6</sup> with Maya.  
 Man, struggling to build a fortune is like a labourer  
 conscripted on wages—  
 He builds another's home with great travail.  
 He is like one who gets kingship in dream:  
 As he opens his eyes, it turns to naught.  
 Man in the world is like a keeper set to guard another's field:

<sup>1</sup>The four Ages of Indian Cosmology are implied.

<sup>2</sup>A yogi who has attained high spiritual and supernatural powers.

<sup>3</sup>Sadhaka. One who practices some form of yoga.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Brahm.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, viewing.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, dyed in.

The field is the master's<sup>1</sup>—the keeper perforce has to quit.  
The keeper bears hardships for this field,  
From which to him no gain comes.  
God the King also breeds in man illusions.<sup>2</sup>  
He creates Maya as also the desire<sup>3</sup> for it.  
God destroys as well as restores—  
Nanak begs for His grace.

*(Raga Gauri Guareri, Guru Arjan, p. 179)*

*Bhupati hoi kai raj kamaiya*

One may become king and exercise authority  
And through tyranny acquire great wealth,  
Hoard it in sacks—  
The Lord God may take it from him and give it away to  
another.  
Man's body is a vessel of glass, lying in water;  
In this frail thing is man engrossed in abounding pride;  
Puts away the fear of God, becoming reckless,  
Forgetting the Creator ever by his side.  
Raising hosts he collects more and more of these:  
As breath leaves him, he is just a handful of dust.<sup>4</sup>  
He may possess lofty mansions, palaces, harems,<sup>5</sup>  
Tuskers, steeds, robes to heart's desire;  
Be lord of a vast tribe, raise progeny—  
Yet blinded by egoism, by delusion is he destroyed;  
By his Creator is he destroyed:  
All his joys rendered dreams.  
Saith Nanak: He alone is truly liberated

<sup>1</sup>Literally, the owner's.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, dreams.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, thirst.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, ashes.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, ranis.



And Lord of real wealth,

Who serves God, earning the Master's grace.

(Raga Asa, Guru Arjan, pp. 391-92)

*Kama krodh nagar bahu bhariya mil sadhu khandal khanda hey*

Full of lust and violence is the world;<sup>1</sup>

Through the Preceptor's touch<sup>2</sup> alone may these be annulled.

Through good actions of births foregone may such Preceptor  
be found—

The Preceptor through whom may overflow the devotee's heart  
with devotion to God.

Make obeisance<sup>3</sup> to such a Preceptor;

Bow to him with thy whole frame<sup>4</sup>

Earn thereby great merit.

The misbeliever knows not the joy of Divine devotion,  
Pricked inside by egoism's thorn.

At each step<sup>5</sup> it pricks and torments him;

And Yama's chastisement<sup>6</sup> falls on his head.

God's devotees, absorbed in His Name—

Their transmigration is annulled.

Those realizing God the eternal Purusha,<sup>7</sup>

Shine in beauty and splendour all over the universe.

Lord! we that are humble, meek are Thine alone—

Save us in Thy greatness.

<sup>1</sup>Original, city.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, meeting, contact, company.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, fold thy hands in the form of a cup.

<sup>4</sup>The position of this line and the following has been interchanged in the rendering.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, as he moves along.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, blows from Yama's mace; for Yama see Glossary.

<sup>7</sup>For Purusha see Glossary.

Saith Nanak, Servant of God:  
God's Name is my support;  
In devotion alone lies my joy.

*(Gauri Purabi, Guru Ramdas, pp. 13, 171)*

*Anik rasah khae jaise dhor*

Man is involved with a vast variety of delicacies  
As is an animal;  
Like a thief is he bound with thongs of attachment.  
The body unsanctified through holy company is like a corpse,  
Tattered through births and deaths innumerable:  
This corpse clad in fine vesture  
Is no better than a scarecrow causing fright in a field.  
All else<sup>1</sup> to some use may be put,  
The Godless<sup>2</sup> man is the most worthless of all.  
Saith Nanak: One on whom God's grace falls  
Engages in meditation on Him in holy company.

*(Raga Gauri, Guru Arjan, p. 190)*

*Lanka se kot samund si khaee*

Ravana in the mighty fort of Lanka,  
Protected by moat of the sea  
Perished away from home and family.<sup>3</sup>  
What boon shall I ask for?  
Nothing that one may wish for lasts—  
This world vanishes before our very sight.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, other bodies.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, one who repeats not God's Name.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, his family got no news of his death.



Ravana with his numerous progeny,  
 All perished—none left to light a lamp in his home.  
 Thus ended the mighty Ravana,  
 Whose kitchen-fire the sun and moon lit;  
 Whose washerman was flaming fire.  
 Divine wisdom centres the mind in God;  
 There it gets firm-fixed and wanders not.  
 Saith Kabir: Listen Loi!<sup>1</sup>  
 Only devotion to God's Name brings liberation.

(Raga Asa, Kabir, p. 481)

## I

*Jinnhan antar Gurmukhpreet hai tin Hari rakhanhara Ram-Raje*

My Lord God! Protector of those filled with love<sup>2</sup> for Thee—  
 Those loving the Name are beyond the world's<sup>3</sup> cavil.  
 No evil-doer<sup>4</sup> shall prevail against those whose heart is in  
 tune with God.

Nanak, Servant of God saith:

God is the Protector of those meditating on the Name.

## II

*Hari jug jug Bhagat upaiya paij rakhda aiya Ram-Raje*

Lord God! in each age hast Thou inspired<sup>5</sup> Thy devotees;  
 Their honour hast Thou upheld.

<sup>1</sup>Name of Kabir's wife.

<sup>2</sup>The person is changed from third to second in several lines to suit the rendering.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, anyone's.

<sup>4</sup>Original, dushta.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, created, raised.

The evil-doer Harnakash<sup>1</sup> didst thou destroy,  
And didst cherish Prahlada;  
Repudiating the arrogant slanderers didst thou shower thy  
favour on Namdev.<sup>2</sup>

Nanak, Servant of God has worshipped the mighty Lord of  
the Universe.

Who ultimately liberates His devotees.

*(Raga Asa, Guru Ramdas, p. 451. Abbreviated)*

*Tun sun harna kaliya ki wariyai rata Rama*

Listen thou black buck,<sup>3</sup> why art thou so absorbed in this  
orchard?<sup>4</sup>

Listen in God's name!

The fruit of poison tastes sweet for a few days only;

Then will it begin to torment thee;

In God's name believe me!

This fruit which has intoxicated thee, will then torment;

Without God wilt thou be in deep suffering.

Pleasure is unstable like the stormy ocean; like the flashing  
lightning.

None is thy protector except God—Him hast thou forgotten.

Believe Nanak, thou black buck!

Forget not that thy path is the path of death.

<sup>1</sup>Prahlad was the saintly son of Harnakash (Hrinyakashyapa) a tyrant atheist, who was destroyed by God assuming the form of tiger-man (Nara Singh).

<sup>2</sup>A saint from one of the 'low' castes.

<sup>3</sup>Symbolizes youthful passion and lust.

<sup>4</sup>The world.



Thou humming-bee,<sup>1</sup> haunting buds, know that pleasure will  
land thee in severe torment.

Thus asked I the Master to instruct me in truth;  
To instruct me in truth, I supplicated the Master.

My friend humming-bee is sunk in pleasure.  
As dawned the day and the body's decline began,  
Pain poured on it like burning oil.

Thou unclean goblin, without the Word,  
Remember that Yama will put thee in bonds and torture  
thee.

Saith Nanak truly: Consider deeply, my black humming-bee!  
Pleasure will only bring thee to eternal death.

My soul, estranged from God, why art thou running into  
snares?

Lodge the Eternal Master in thy heart—why run into snares?

Thou shalt wail like the fish, separated from the water,  
As into the fisherman's net it rushes.

Delicious are the delusions of the world;  
God alone may emancipate from this delusion.

Love God; turn thy heart to Him, give up all fear of the  
world!

Saith Nanak truly: Contemplate God, thou my soul estrang-  
ed from Him.

As rivers get separated from their sources, they may meet  
again only by supreme good luck.

The whole world is full of sweet poison—only the Yogi<sup>2</sup> knows  
this truth:

Only those enlightened may know this,  
and be God-conscious—only such as contemplate Him.

<sup>1</sup>Symbol of the voluptuary.

<sup>2</sup>Implies one with soul illuminated.

Those forgetful of God are in the maze of doubt—in folly and ignorance are they ruined.

Those whose hearts are without God's Eternal Name and His love.

Will in the end wail and cry bitterly.

Saith Nanak truly: Through God's Word will the long-separated ones<sup>1</sup> be united.

(*Raga Asa Chhant, Guru Nanak, pp. 438-39*)

#### EXTRACTS FROM ASA-KI-VAR

Asa-ki-Var (Disquisitional Composition in the Raga Asa) casts a penetrating glance over the falsehood of traditional religious beliefs, superstitions, and injustices of society. In it Guru Nanak has, so to speak, administered to the mind of man a dose of bitter medicine to purge his system of egoism, hypocrisy, and adherence to false values. Like a sulphurous flame it burns away the impurities of the mind. Withal it contains deep insights into spiritual life and the Divine Law which governs the Cosmos. The text of this composition, which comprises about 15 pages of the *Granth Sahib*, would be an illuminating intellectual and spiritual experience. A few extracts are reproduced in this book.

In the whole range of Indian social and spiritual thought for several centuries till Guru Nanak's time, nothing so creative and deep had appeared as this magnificent composition. Its themes on the one hand are the repudiation of Maya, of superstition, obscurantism, and the widespread hypocrisy and injustice in society and the state. On the other hand, it expresses deep mysticism and faith and that search for Divine illumination which is the highest peak of religious experience.

<sup>1</sup>Refers to the self separated from God through cycles of transmigration.



In numerous senses, this composition heralds enlightened thought in more spheres than had been attempted by any other teacher or savant in our country. A few passages in it are the composition of Guru Angad, successor to Guru Nanak, who gave form to this sacred text.

*Haumai eha jati hai haumai karma kamahi*

Egoism is man's nature;

Through egoism does he perform actions.

Egoism is the bondage that brings the self again and again to birth.

How has it arisen?

By what discipline may it be discarded?

Know that egoism exists by Divine Ordinance;

One caught in it has no escape from action.

Egoism is a malignant malady.

Yet is it not without remedy:

Should God's grace come, man may live the Preceptor's holy Word.

Saith Nanak: Listen friends!

By such discipline would this malady be cured.

*(Guru Angad, p. 466)*

*Seva kiti Santokhieen jinhin sacho sach dhiaiya*

The true servants of God are those men of contentment

Who ever contemplated holy Truth;

Stepping not into evil,

Through their pure lives<sup>1</sup> have they practised righteousness.<sup>2</sup>  
 They snapped ties with the world,  
 And partook little of its pleasures.<sup>3</sup>  
 Lord! thou art the great Bestower—  
 Ever more are Thy gifts.<sup>4</sup>  
 By devotion does man realize the Almighty.

(Guru Angad, p. 466-67)

*Sach ta par janiyai ja ridai sacha hoi*

He alone is truly pure whose heart is pure;<sup>5</sup>  
 Who sheds the filth of falsehood,  
 And through self-purification<sup>6</sup> makes his body chaste.  
 He alone is truly pure who loves truth;  
 One whose heart joys in God's Name shall alone attain the  
 Door of Liberation.  
 He alone is truly pure who knows the practice of the *pure*  
 life:  
 After preparing the soil of the self<sup>7</sup>  
 Should he sow in it devotion to the Creator.<sup>8</sup>  
 He alone is truly pure who receives the true precept,  
 Is full of compassion and gives away his substance in charity.  
 He alone is truly pure who takes his abode in the pilgrim-  
 spot<sup>9</sup> of his self,

<sup>1</sup>Original, deeds.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Dharma.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, food and drink.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, always thou givest and to that still more is added.

<sup>5</sup>Original, truthful. 'Purity' however, is all through implied.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, ablutions.

<sup>7</sup>Literally, body.

<sup>8</sup>Literally, should sow seed of the Creator.

<sup>9</sup>Original, tirtha (holy bathing-place).



And taking the Master's precept abides therein.  
 Truth is the sovereign medicine—  
 All evil it drives out.  
 Nanak seeks the grace of those  
 Whose hearts are pure, truthful.<sup>1</sup>

(Guru Nanak, p. 468)

### THE TRUE SACRED THREAD (*Yagyapavit*)

#### I

*Daya kapah santokh soot jati gandhi sati vatt*

Make compassion the cotton, contentment the yarn;  
 Give it chastity's twist and knot:  
 Such is the true thread of the self.  
 Put such on me, thou Brahmin, shouldst thou have it.  
 Such thread will neither snap nor be soiled;  
 Neither burn nor be lost.  
 Blessed O Nanak, are those who wear round their neck such  
 a thread.  
 This thread thou givest  
 Is worth four cowries;  
 In the kitchen-space is it assumed;  
 Over the head<sup>2</sup> and ears is it wrapped,  
 By the Brahmin turned preceptor.  
 When death comes to the wearer  
 This thread drops off—  
 So to the next world he proceeds divested of the thread.

(Guru Nanak, p. 471)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, who possess truth.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, the tuft of hair left unshorn by orthodox Hindus.

## II

*Tagg na indri tagg na nari*

You bind<sup>1</sup> not your lust with the thread,  
 Nor your desire for woman;  
 Each morning shame falls on you for your deeds.<sup>2</sup>  
 Neither your feet nor your hands are bound by the thread;  
 Neither your slanderous tongue nor your lustful eyes.  
 The priest wears no thread himself,<sup>3</sup>  
 Yet he twists the thread and puts it on others;  
 For wage he sanctifies marriages,  
 And from the scripture professes to show the true way.  
 People of the world!  
 Look at this marvel—  
 One blind in soul is called wise!<sup>4</sup>

(Guru Nanak, p. 471)

ON THE SUPERSTITION OF SUTAK<sup>5</sup>

## I

*Jekar sutak manniyai sabhtai sutak hoi*

Should sutak be believed, no place is exempt from the  
*impurity*<sup>6</sup> of Sutak:

<sup>1</sup>Literally, do not tie the sacred thread over your lust etc.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, spittle is spattered over your beards.

<sup>3</sup>The implication of course, is that his mind is not pure.

<sup>4</sup>In this passage it is the Brahmin priest, with his hollow pose of holiness who is castigated.

<sup>5</sup>Sutak : The ritual impurity of a house for a fixed period wherein a birth has taken place. *Sutak* is believed also to render the new mother 'impure' for a like period.

<sup>6</sup>Only the supposed impurity of traditional belief is implied.



Cow-dung and firewood<sup>1</sup> each contains worms;  
 No grain of food is without a living creature;  
 Then water which gives life<sup>2</sup> to all things  
 Is itself alive.

How may sutak be observed when even the kitchen is not  
 free from it?

Saith Nanak: Impurity<sup>3</sup> is not removed through ritual—  
 Spiritual illumination alone removes it.

(Guru Nanak, p. 472)

## II

*Mana ka sutak lobh hai jihva sutak koor*<sup>4</sup>

The Mind's sutak is avarice, the Tongue's falsehood;  
 The Eyes' sutak is the coveting of the body of another's  
 woman and his wealth;

The Ear's sutak is pleasure in hearing slander:

Through such defilement, Nanak, men and their souls are  
 dragged bound to the city of Yama.<sup>5</sup>

All belief in sutak is superstition, born of illusion.<sup>6</sup>

Birth and death come by decree; man comes and goes by His  
 will.

Food and drink is all pure, coming as apportioned by God.

Nanak, those who have acquired awareness of God,

By His grace are not deluded by thought of Sutak.

(Guru Nanak, p. 472)

<sup>1</sup>These are mentioned as these serve as fuel in the kitchen, which is the purest spot in a Hindu home.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, makes green or fresh.

<sup>3</sup>Original, sutak (impurity of the mind is meant).

<sup>4</sup>The Guru points out the meaninglessness of the belief in sutak, and instead makes impurity inhere in moral evil.

<sup>5</sup>That is, to harsh retribution.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, duality.

III

*So kiun manda akhaiya jitt jamme rajan*

Why revile her from whom are born the great ones of the earth?

From woman is born woman: no man may dispense with woman.

The Eternal alone is without a female.

Beautiful is the face of one who utters words of prayer.

Such alone, Nanak, have beaming faces in God's Eternal Court!

*(Guru Nanak, p. 473)*

THE TYRANT HYPOCRITES

I

*Manas khane karain Nivaj*

Those who slaughter human beings perform namaz;<sup>1</sup>  
Those wielding the butcher's knife<sup>2</sup> wear the sacred thread.  
Brahmins blow the conch-shell<sup>3</sup> in their homes—  
As much slaves of appetites are these as their employers.  
Evil is the capital, evil the commerce<sup>4</sup> of such;  
From evil-doing is their living derived.  
Decency and righteousness have vanished.  
Nanak, falsehood is all-pervasive.

*(Guru Nanak, p. 471)*

<sup>1</sup>The Muslim prayer.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. over men.

<sup>3</sup>A form of worship and blessing.

<sup>4</sup>Implies the way of life in general.



## II

*Mathai tikka ter dhoti kakhaee*

They put the paste-mark on their foreheads, and wear the  
 ritual dhoti,  
 Yet in their hands they hold the knife and slaughter<sup>1</sup> all they  
 lay hands on.  
 They wear blue, to curry favour with their Mohammadan  
 masters,  
 Receive wages from Mlechhas<sup>2</sup> and yet profess to venerate  
 the Puranas:  
 They eat of the meat slaughtered by Muslim rites;<sup>3</sup>  
 Yet forbid anyone to enter their kitchen-space.<sup>4</sup>  
 They plaster<sup>5</sup> the place, draw the sacred line—  
 Inside sit these men with the lie in their souls,  
 Warning lest anyone defile the kitchen  
 And make impure their<sup>6</sup> food.  
 Foul of body, they practise deceit;  
 With foul minds they rinse their mouths for purity.  
 Saith Nanak, meditate on the Eternal:  
 Only with purity of mind may God be found.

(*Guru Nanak, pp. 471-72*)

<sup>1</sup>Used metaphorically.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. Mohammedans.

<sup>3</sup>Unclean for a Hindu.

<sup>4</sup>To prevent defilement.

<sup>5</sup>This ceremonial consists in plastering the place with cowdung.

<sup>6</sup>Original, our.

ON THE HINDU RENEGADES

*Gau Brahman kau kar lawau gobar tarn na jae*

You impose taxes on the cow and the Brahmin;  
And yet will cow-dung which you worship, get you  
emancipation?

You wear dhotis, put paste-marks on your foreheads and  
handle beads;

Yet you live on earnings made from Muslims whom you call  
Mlechhas.<sup>1</sup>

Secretly you practise Hindu rituals,  
But make a show of reading Muslim books and observe the  
Turks'<sup>2</sup> customs.

Discard hypocrisy!

Repeat God's Name—that alone will bring emancipation.

*(Guru Nanak, p. 471)*

ON FALSE CHARITY

*Je mohaka ghar muhai ghar moh pitri deai*

A robber, who gives away charity out of his booty,  
For the benefit of his ancestor's soul—  
In the next world the stolen goods will be identified,  
And the recipient ancestor be arraigned as thief;  
The hands of the middleman<sup>3</sup> who sanctifies such charity  
will be lopped off in punishment.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, evil-minded.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. Muslim.

<sup>3</sup>Here the priest who sanctifies such charity is implied.



Nanak, only that will benefit in the next world which a man gives away from his honest earning.

(Guru Nanak, p. 472)

#### FROM THE SLOKAS OF SHEIKH FARID

The day this life-female shall be claimed (by Death, her spouse) is pre-ordained;

The Angel of Death<sup>1</sup> ye have heard speak of, will show his face,

and draw this frail life out, twisting and torturing the frame to the marrow in the bones:

This day pre-ordained shall nowise be put off—  
tell this to thy life:

This life is the bride, Death the bridegroom who will carry her away in wedlock;

On whose shoulder will the body weep after giving away the bride with its own hands?<sup>2</sup>

On the other side of Death is the bridge,<sup>3</sup> narrower than hair's breadth, over the chasm of hell, full with deafening cries;

Listen Farid: Terrible will be the hubbub there—  
let not thyself be robbed through thoughtlessness. (1)

Farid, had I known the store<sup>4</sup> of life so slender,  
sparing would I be of scattering it about;

<sup>1</sup>Malak, here Malakaul-Maut—the Angel of Death according to Muslim belief.

<sup>2</sup>The imagery in this sloka is of the giving away of a bride, who in India is customarily loth to leave the parents' home.

<sup>3</sup>According to Muslim belief, *Sirat*, an extremely narrow path passing over hell, which the righteous alone can cross over.

<sup>4</sup>Original, til, grains of sesame.

Did I know the Beloved so indifferent, less would I  
show of woman's vanity. (4)

Did I know the knot of love so frail,  
firmer would I tie it:

Lord, none to me is dear as Thou—thus have  
I determined after life's sojourn. (5)

Farid, why wanderest thou over wild places,  
trampling thorns under thy feet?

God abides in the heart: seek Him not in  
lonely wastes. (19)

Farid, once these frail legs of mine scoured  
over hill and desert;

Today the prayer-jug<sup>1</sup> at hand is removed  
a hundred miles. (20)

Farid, the lanes are muddy; the Beloved's home  
far, yet my love for Him is deep;

If I stir out, my cloak<sup>2</sup> will get wet;

If I stay back, am I false to my love. (24)

Let the cloak be drenched through;  
let it rain never so much—

Go I must to meet the Loved One,<sup>3</sup>

So my love prove not false. (25)

This night I couched not with my Lord;

My limbs are all in torture with unfulfilment:

<sup>1</sup>Kuza, small earthenware jug for water for ablution before namaz, the Muslim prayer.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, woollen sheet or blanket (kamali).

<sup>3</sup>Plural in the original, but the sense rendered is meant.



I ask the woman cast off,  
In what agony must thy nights be passed? (30)

Farid, those who carry the prayer-mat on  
their shoulders and wear rough wool,<sup>1</sup>  
But bear daggers in their hearts and utter falsehood  
with their glib tongues—  
These are bright outside but have the dark night  
in their hearts. (50)

Farid, seek a vast lake wherein thou mayst find  
what thou seekest—God's Name;  
Why seek a filthy pond, muddying thy hands?<sup>2</sup> (53)

On the marge of the pool of the world have alighted swans;<sup>3</sup>  
They dip not their beaks in it,  
Spreading their pinions for flight ever. (64)

The swan hath alighted in the field of chaff;  
People scare it away;  
The ignorant multitude not knowing,  
The swan pecks not at chaff. (65)

Gone are the birds which brought life to the pools;  
The entire pool will flow off, leaving alone the lotuses.<sup>3</sup> (66)

Farid, at midnight is scattered fragrant musk;  
Those asleep share not this blessing:<sup>4</sup>  
What union for those with eyes slumber-oppressed.<sup>5</sup> (80)

<sup>1</sup>This was the usual wear of the Sufi (from suf, wool.)

<sup>2</sup>Lake is a great teacher or creed; pond a petty or narrow one.

<sup>3</sup>Symbols for men of God.

<sup>4</sup>Original, will obtain nothing.

<sup>5</sup>A noble mystical state of joy and communion is expressed in this sloka, one of the most beautiful in this collection.

Farid, life is like a crane sporting on the river's bank,  
Suddenly on it hath swooped the swift hawk;  
As comes this hawk from God, all sporting is forgotten;  
God sends on man what never he thought or imagined. (99)

This body weighing three and a half maunds<sup>1</sup> is sustained by  
food and water;

Man comes into the world with a vast store of hope;  
As visible Death approaches, smashing through all doors,  
Those loving friends and brothers perforce surrender thee  
to him.

Behold Man, departing this world borne on shoulders of  
four pall-bearers;  
Farid, only the good deeds done in this life stand by us in  
the next. (100)

Make forbearance thy bow and bow-string;  
The arrow too of forbearance—  
God will not let it go off its mark. (115)

Those who adopt forbearance and take upon themselves  
suffering—  
Such alone will be near God: their secret strength none will  
know. (116)

Make forbearance thy life's ideal; learn hard this lesson;  
Thus wilt thou become a mighty river, not a petty channel.  
(117)

Speak never a rude word to any—the Lord Eternal abideth  
in all:  
Break no heart—know each being is a priceless jewel. (129)

<sup>1</sup>The 'maund' in early times weighed less than today.



Each heart is a jewel; evil it is to break any;  
Shouldst thou seek to find the Beloved, break no  
one's heart. (130)

(Pp. 1377-84)

*Dilonh muhabbat jinn sei sacchiya*

Those alone are true devotees whose hearts are sincerely in  
love with God:  
The ones whose hearts are belied by their tongues are false,  
inconstant.<sup>1</sup>  
The true devotees soaked in God's love are ever in ecstasy of  
realization;  
Those indifferent to Him are a burden on earth.  
The true devotees are those whom God attaches unto Him-  
self;  
Blessed is their birth; truly fruitful their life.  
Thou art the Cherisher—unfathomable, inaccessible;  
I worship<sup>2</sup> at their feet who have realized Thee.  
Lord, I seek shelter in Thee;  
Thou alone the bestower of forgiveness.  
Grant to Sheikh Farid the charity of Thy devotion.

(Raga Asa, p. 588)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, of unbaked clay.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, kiss.

four      *Yogi ! Realize the Essence*

*Audhoo sahjai tatt beechar*

Thou Recluse, attune thy mind to meditating on the Essence,  
So thou takest not birth again.

Meditate on Him who is beyond ritual, creeds, and reach of  
forms of piety:<sup>1</sup>

This knowledge comes from the beneficent Divine Light itself.  
God alone protects man from sin.

Meditate on Him who is beyond ritual fasts, vows, and  
polemics;

Who is beyond good and evil—learn this God-given wisdom.

Meditate on Him who is beyond hope and despair—

This wisdom comes from absorption of mind in Him.

Whoever meditates on Him, attains true wisdom;

His self is merged into the universal Self;

Such wisdom has been given to Nanak.

*(Raga Prabhati, Guru Nanak, p. 1328)*

*Jog na khintha jog na dandai joh na bhasam charhaeeyai*

Yoga lies not in the begging-pouch, in carrying a staff;

Nor in smearing the limbs with ashes;

Yoga lies not in earrings or in cropping close the hair;

Or in blowing the horn.

To live immaculate amidst the impurities of the world—

This is true Yoga-practice;

Perfection in Yoga lies not in bragging.

The true Yogi is one who views in all existence harmony.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, pious telling of rosary beads.



Yoga consists not in wandering in cremation spots,  
 nor in falling into trances:  
 Nor lies it in wandering about the world, nor in ritual  
 bathing.  
 To live immaculate amidst the impurities of the world—  
 This is true Yoga-practice.

Illusions are shattered through spiritual contact with the true  
 Preceptor,  
 And the wandering mind is restrained.  
 From the spring showers amrita;  
 Celestial harmony is heard, and God-realization arises from  
 the soul.<sup>1</sup>  
 To live immaculate amidst the impurities of the world—  
 This is true Yoga-practice.

Nanak, achieve such Union<sup>2</sup> as may bring about the cessation  
 of passions;<sup>3</sup>  
 Unstruck celestial harmony may be heard—  
 Then may ye claim to attain the state of complete poise.<sup>4</sup>  
 To live immaculate amidst the impurities of the world—  
 This is true Yoga-practice.

(*Raga Suhi, Guru Nanak, p. 730*)

*Mat bhasmi andhule garb jahi*

Thou spiritually blind, think not rubbing of  
 ashes over the body will drive away egoism.  
 Yoga comes not in this way, thou who hast cast off clothing:

<sup>1</sup>The experiences recounted here are commonly supposed to result from the successful practice of Hatha-Yoga. <sup>2</sup>Original, *Yoga*. <sup>3</sup>Literally, death in life. <sup>4</sup>Literally, fearlessness.

Destroy the five evils,<sup>1</sup> keep your mind in poise—  
That is the true basis of Yoga-practice.  
The tether of egoism is binding thy feet;  
Forgetful man, thou thinkest not on God,  
Which alone brings emancipation.

(Raga Basant, Guru Nanak, p. 1189)

*Dubidha na paron Hari bin hor na poojaun*

I fall not into doubt, worship not any but God,  
And frequent not the resting places of the dead;<sup>2</sup>  
I follow not desire in seeking what is another's;  
The Name alone slakes my thirst;<sup>3</sup>  
My Preceptor has vouchsafed to me the vision of God within  
my own soul—  
Dyed in enlightenment, I find true joy.  
Thou art all-knowing and all-seeing, Lord,  
and givest true wisdom.  
The mind has turned indifferent to worldliness;  
It is pierced through with God's love:  
My inside is illumined; in unending stream the Divine Word  
pours on to me; my soul is attuned to God.  
The mind is volatile like the wind; it seeks pleasures.  
True joy lies in resting in God.  
In that state tongue, eyes and ears are dyed in Divine love;  
Desire is extinguished through Thy grace.  
The true *Bairagi* is one who cuts himself off from the pursuit  
of desire,  
And is fixed in God-realization.

<sup>1</sup>Lust, wrath, avarice, spiritual ignorance, and egoism.

<sup>2</sup>As was done by certain votaries of Hatha.

<sup>3</sup>Desire.



To such a one the alms of God's Name has brought fulfilment  
and contentment;  
Through meditation has he quaffed amrita.  
Vairag<sup>1</sup> comes not to one in the grip of Duality—  
Not as long as even a grain of Duality remains.  
Thy names are: Reposing in the Void; the Supreme Value;  
Lord of the Three Worlds.  
They alone know the joy of God-realization who have tested it:  
As the dumb who have tasted of sweets, they fail to describe it.  
How may one describe that which is indescribable?  
The sole way to God-realization is complete submission to  
His will.

(*Raga Sorath, Guru Nanak, pp. 634-35*)

*Sachi surati Nam nahin tripte haumai karat gawaiya*

Thou hast not turned thy mind to the Eternal,  
nor sought fulfilment in God;  
And wasted thy life in egoism and arrogance.  
Thou hast coveted others' wealth, desired sensual pleasures,<sup>2</sup>  
slandered others.  
Of poison hast thou eaten and suffered pain;  
Thou hast not contemplated God's Word to relieve thyself of  
fear and malice.  
Worldling:<sup>3</sup> thou hast hankered after the things of this world.  
Thou hast carried through life on thy shoulders heavy  
dragon-loads:  
Involved in transmigration, hast thou made the worst use of  
thy human incarnation.

(*Raga Malhar, Guru Nanak, p. 1255*)

<sup>1</sup>Dispassion towards the world.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, pleasure in others' womenfolk.

<sup>3</sup>Original, manmukh.

*Sukh mangat dukh agal hoi*

The quest of pleasure brings nothing but torment abounding;  
Man thus makes only a necklace of his evil desires.

Thou seeker of false delights, liberation comes only through  
love of God;

God created all and watches their deeds!

The fire of worldly desire is quenched only by the Word of  
God.

The rest is all illusion pure and simple.

Let man turn towards God and enshrine Him in the heart.

Chant the Divine Word and utter God's praise.

*(Raga Gauri Guareri, Guru Nanak, p. 222)*

*So Sanyasi jo Satiguru sevai vichon ap gawai*

The true Sanyasi serves God, and gives up egoism.

He seeks not the things of this world<sup>1</sup>,

And takes whatever comes without hankering after it.

He neither wags his tongue in loose talk nor speaks from  
egoism;

He hoards the wealth of forgiveness,

And burns away evil passions in the fire of God-  
contemplation.

Blessed is everyone—householder, Sanyasi, or Yogi—who  
loves God's holy feet.

The true Sanyasi is above hope and despair, his mind fixed in  
God alone.

His mind finds content only in tasting joy in God, and is  
centred in truth.

The restlessness of his mind stilled,

<sup>1</sup>Literally, clothing and food.



Through Divine grace he acquires God-consciousness—  
 The unsteadiness of his mind is brought under restraint.  
 By the wisdom given by God he searches in the recesses of  
     his self,  
 And finds therein the wealth of the Name.

(*Raga Maru, Guru Nanak, p. 1013*)

*Guru-pir sadae mangan jae*

One who claims to be a saint,  
 And goes about begging—  
 Touch not his feet!  
 He whose livelihood is earned through work,  
 And part given away in charity—  
 Such a one, Nanak! truly knows the way to God.

(*Var Sarang, Guru Nanak, p. 1245*)

*Saligram bip puj manavahu sukrit tulsi mala*

Let the Brahmin worship saligram<sup>1</sup> and tulsi beads;  
 I launch my boat with meditation on Rama for my support;  
 Show Thy mercy, compassionate Lord!  
 Why are you, men of the world, irrigating alkaline soil?  
 Why make waste of your human life?  
 The mud-wall you are erecting will collapse;  
 What use buttressing it with mortar?  
 Turn your lust and wrath into shovels;  
 Dig with these the soil of your hearts:  
 As deeper you dig, bliss will be your reward;  
 The consequences of actions none can annul.

(*Raga Basant, Guru Nanak, p. 1171*)

<sup>1</sup>A kind of stone, believed to represent Vishnu.

## ON MIRACLES

*Pahiran agni hivai ghar bandhan bhojan sar karai*

Were I to wear the vesture of fire, lodge in a house of snow  
and feed on iron;

Were I to drink universal suffering like water at a gulp and  
drive the earth about;

Were I to weigh the heavens in balance, against an ounce  
weight;

Were I to expand beyond the limits of earth and heaven, and  
bring all under my sway;

Were my will to be omnipotent,  
And bind the universe in obedience—

What then?

Mighty is the Lord, and great His gifts!

Saith Nanak, His greatest gift in His grace

Is the greatness of devotion to His Name.

(*Raga Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 147*)

## THE FALSITY OF WARRING SECTS

## I

*Rah dowai ik janai soi sijhasi*

He who knows the two paths<sup>1</sup> to be one, will alone find  
fulfilment;

The evil slanderer and caviller must burn in hell-fire;

The whole universe is Divine in essence—

Merge yourselves into Truth.

(*Raga Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 142*)

<sup>1</sup>Hindu and Muslim; this is also the sense of the term in the second poem.



## II

*Rah dowai Khasam eko jan*

Know the Lord to be One, even though the paths be twain.  
Through God's Word learn His commandment:  
Give equal place in thy heart to all human forms and castes!  
Saith Nanak, only the One is worthy of worship.

(*Raga Gauri, Guru Nanak, p. 223*)

### THE FOUR RIVERS OF FIRE IN MAN'S LIFE

## I

*Hans het lobh kop chare nadian agg*

Violence, attachment, avarice and wrath—these be the four  
rivers of fire:

Whoever falls into these, is consumed;

Only such as have God's grace, swim across.

(*Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 147*)

## II

*Char nadi agni asral*

Four are the fearful rivers of fire—

Only the man of God has understanding of the Word  
celestial.<sup>1</sup>

The unbeliever caught in false notions is consumed—

Only the Master saves him who is dyed in God's love.

(*Raga Maru, Guru Nanak, p. 1031*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, rare.

THE HOLY FEAR OF GOD

I

*Bhay vich pawan vahai sad wao*

In fear<sup>1</sup> the air blows in innumerable currents;  
In fear flow millions of streams;  
In fear fire performs its service;  
In fear is the earth pressed under its burden.  
In fear moves Indra<sup>2</sup> in utter humility.  
In fear sits the Celestial Judge<sup>3</sup> in his court.  
Sun and moon move about in fear,  
And traverse millions of kosas<sup>4</sup> without limit.  
In fear pray mystics, enlightened ones, gods and yogis.  
In fear are the heavens spread.  
Heroes of mighty force too are in fear of Him.  
In fear pass the millions through birth and death.  
The writ of fear governs all creation.  
Nanak, only the Formless Eternal is free from fear.

*(Var Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 464)*

II

*Bhay vich jammai bhay marai bhi bhau mana mahi hoi*

He who is born and dies with fear of God, and bears such  
fear in his heart—  
Nanak, if such a one dies bearing the fear of God, his life is  
truly fruitful.

<sup>1</sup>Fear of God. This is also the sense in all succeeding lines.

<sup>2</sup>King of the gods.

<sup>3</sup>Dharmaraj.

<sup>4</sup>A kosa is a distance a little over a mile.



One who lives without the fear of God, and has pleasures manifold—

Nanak, if he dies unmindful of God, his face shall be blackened hereafter.

(*Var Majh, Guru Amardas, p. 149*)

### III

*Bhau much bhara vadda tol*

The fear of God is mighty and of great weight.

Egoism is worthless<sup>1</sup> and just vociferous.

Walk under the weight of such fear;

And through Divine grace obtain knowledge of God.

None crosses the ocean<sup>2</sup> unless he bear fear;

Through fear the fear-directed life is beautified with Divine love.

Through fear of the world, the fire of fear blazes in the human frame.

Through fear of God and love is moulded spiritual beauty.

Without fear of God, all that is uttered is misshapen and worthless—

The mould and the shaping strokes are both blind.

Fear of God is the abode, and in such abode is fear—

Through fear of God worldly fears vanish.

The fear of God which eliminates all other fears—  
how may it be called fear?

There is no other resting-place except Thou;

All that happens is Thy Will.

One might be afraid if anything other than God held any fear—

To be shaken with such fears is sheer perturbation of mind.

(*Raga Gauri, Guru Nanak, p. 151*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, light.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. of Maya.

IV

*Ikk moorakh andhe mugdh gawar*

Some are purblind fools, unawakened in mind;  
Others bear fear of God and take shelter in the Name.  
The holy Word is the sweet stream of amrita;  
Whoever drinks of it finds the door of liberation.  
He who lodges the Name, the fear and love,  
And the doings of the Lord and His holy Word in his heart,  
On him shall fall the shower of Divine bliss;  
The earth for him shall be beautiful;  
And all creatures he shall see infused in Divine light.  
The mark of the Godless man is the folly of sowing in  
    blasted<sup>1</sup> soil;  
Without the Divine Master all is pitch darkness; .  
Those caught in it are tormented with thirst.<sup>2</sup>

*(Raga Malhar, Guru Nanak, p. 1275)*

*Mehar masit sidak musalla haq halal Koran*

Make thy mosque of love of humanity;  
Thy prayer-carpet of sincerity;  
Thy Koran of honest and approved endeavour;  
Thy circumcision of modesty;  
Thy Ramadan fast of noble conduct—  
Thus shalt thou be a true Muslim.  
Make good deeds thy Kaaba;  
Truthfulness thy preceptor;  
Thy namaz and Kalima<sup>3</sup> pure actions;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, alkaline soil, in which the seed does not sprout.

<sup>2</sup>Desire, which keeps the mind restless.

<sup>3</sup>Namaz—the Muslim prayer; Kalima—the Muslim creed of affirmation of faith in Allah and Muhammad.



Thy rosary what pleases God—  
 Thus wilt thou be honoured at the last reckoning.  
 Five are the prayers, five the hours to perform them;  
 Five their different names;  
 What are the true prayers?  
 The first is truthfulness; the next honest endeavour;  
 The third, prayer offered to God for good of all;  
 The fourth is a sincere heart;  
 The fifth, devotion<sup>1</sup> to God:  
 One whose Kalima is good actions is alone a true Muslim.  
 Saith Nanak: All who are false within in the end prove of no  
 worth.<sup>2</sup>

(*Var Majh, Guru Nanak, pp. 140-141*)

*Musalman kahawan mushkal*

Hard it is to become<sup>3</sup> a true Muslim;  
 Only one truly such may be so called.  
 His first action, to love the way of the holy;  
 Second, to shed off his heart's filth as on the grindstone.  
 One professing to be a guide to Muslims must shed the  
 illusion of life and death.<sup>4</sup>  
 To God's will must he submit;  
 Obey God and efface his self.  
 Such a one shall be a blessing for all,  
 And be truly reckoned a Muslim.

(*Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 141*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, praising God.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, will be of false worth.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, to be called.

<sup>4</sup>That is, in life he must be free from desire, as though dead to the world.

*Je rat laggai kaprai jama hoi palit*

Should clothing be rendered impure through blood-stains,<sup>1</sup>  
How reckon pure the way of those sucking<sup>2</sup> human blood?  
Saith Nanak: utter God's<sup>3</sup> Name with thy tongue in purity  
of heart—

That alone is true religion:

All else<sup>4</sup> is worldly show and false deeds.

*(Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 140)*

*Garbh-vas main kul nahin jati*

In the mother's womb to man belongs neither heredity nor  
caste;

All men are created out of the Divine Essence.<sup>5</sup>

Thou Brahmin! when were some exalted to be Brahmins?

Waste not thy life in the superstition of thy superiority.<sup>6</sup>

If thy Brahmin birth be truly superior,

Why did nature not devise for thee another mode of  
creation?<sup>7</sup>

Why are you Brahmins and we Sudras?<sup>8</sup>

Why are we reckoned impure as blood and you noble as  
though milk?

<sup>1</sup>Such is the belief, particularly among the Muslims. This hymn has been addressed obviously to a congregation of Muslims.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, drinking.

<sup>3</sup>Original : Khuda, the common Muslim name for God.

<sup>4</sup>External ritual and excessive show of piety is implied and castigated.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, drop.

<sup>6</sup>This is not the literal rendering though the sense is conveyed.

<sup>7</sup>Here again the rendering is not literal but the sense is brought out.

<sup>8</sup>Kabir was a Kori or Julaha (weaver), reckoned a low caste.



Saith Kabir: Among us<sup>1</sup> he alone is known as Brahmin,  
Who contemplates the Highest.<sup>2</sup>

(*Raga Gauri, Kabir, p. 324*)

*Hindu kai ghar Hindu awai*

A Brahmin called into a Hindu's home  
Invests him with the sacred thread by reciting a text:  
But the wearer thereof who still engages in evil,  
With all his ritual purification finds not God's approval.<sup>3</sup>  
The Mussalman reciting holy texts<sup>3</sup>  
Finds no approval without guidance from the right preceptor.  
Through guidance alone few attain the goal:  
Without pure action no one enters Paradise.  
One may consult the Yogi about the practice of yoga,  
And for that may wear the earrings:<sup>4</sup>  
The Yogi wearing earrings wanders all over to attain God—  
Yet everywhere is the Creator.  
All who are born are only wayfarers,  
And when the call arrives must depart without delay.  
Only through enlightenment may one realize God:  
For the rest, Hindu or Muslim ritual is of little help.  
All must render their account at God's Portal—  
None shall be saved<sup>5</sup> except through good actions.  
Those bearing truth in their hearts  
Shall not be questioned in the Hereafter.

(*Var Ramkali, Guru Nanak, p. 951-52*)

<sup>1</sup>That is, among the spiritually awakened.

<sup>2</sup>Original : Brahm.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, uttering praise of God.

<sup>4</sup>Earrings made from various substances are worn by Yogis of all orders.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, cross over.

*Ham ghar soot taneh nit tana kanth janeu tumhare*

In our homes is spun yarn from cotton:  
Yet the holy thread<sup>1</sup> made of this you wear round your necks!  
Know thou Brahmin !  
While you recite the Vedas and Gayatri by mouth only,  
In the hearts of the unlearned like us does God<sup>2</sup> abide!  
Vishnu-Narayana<sup>3</sup> abides on my tongue, in my eyes;  
In my heart abides Lord of the Universe.<sup>4</sup>  
Say Mukund, thou deluded Brahmin!  
What answer shalt thou make at Yama's Portal?  
We common folk are like the herd,  
Of which you Brahmins are thought to be keepers—  
For generations upon generations have you been such.  
What kind of masters are you?  
Never have you rowed us across,<sup>5</sup> never saved us!  
Thou a superior Brahmin;  
I, a low-born weaver of Kashi.  
Thou Brahmin!  
Know, this wisdom have I grasped:  
You beg at the doors of kings and lords;  
My soul is attuned to God!<sup>6</sup>

*(Raga Asa, Kabir, p. 482)*

<sup>1</sup>Refers to the Brahminical sacred thread, Yagyopavit.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Govinda.

<sup>3</sup>Narayana is one of the names of Vishnu.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Govinda.

<sup>5</sup>This is the plaint of the untouchable made against the Brahmin, who is accused of being self-righteous and indifferent to others' spiritual welfare. This is one of the great protests against the treatment meted out to the untouchable, whose spiritual and material welfare was no one's concern.

<sup>6</sup>Original, Hari.



## HYMNS OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

*Sadho mana ka man tiyago*

My devotee friends, banish egoism from your minds;  
Flee ever by day or night lust, violence,<sup>1</sup> and  
consorting with the evil-minded.

He alone hath known the Essence  
Who meets indifferently pleasure and suffering,  
Worldly honour and neglect,<sup>2</sup>  
And has risen beyond joy and sorrow;  
Who indifferently receives praise and calumny,  
And seeks alone the state sublime of transcendence.<sup>3</sup>

Saith Nanak, Servant of God :

Hard is this path<sup>4</sup> of life—

Only through Divine grace may one  
master its secret.

(*Raga Gauri, p. 219*)

*Sadho eh mana gahiyo na jae*

My devotee friends, hard it is to restrain<sup>5</sup> this restless mind.  
Immersed in desire,<sup>6</sup> and unfixed therefore.

In this mind abides violence insurmountable,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, wrath (krodh), but the more general evil of violence is implied.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, disgrace.

<sup>3</sup>Nirban : Nirvana, the sublime state in which all experience relating to matter (maya) is transcended.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, play (the figure is changed in the rendering).

<sup>5</sup>Literally, grasp.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, thirst.

<sup>7</sup>Literally, hard violence. Original: Krodh.

By irresistible force clouding all judgement.  
Yogis despite their praxis, and sages with their  
    chanting of Divine laudation—  
All fail to attain the Lord.  
Saith Nanak, Servant of God: Only by His grace  
May union with Him be achieved.

(*Raga Gauri, p. 219*)

*Sadho Rama-saran bisrama*

My devotee friends, in God's shelter alone lies peace.<sup>1</sup>  
Instruction in Vedas and Puranas<sup>2</sup> is of value alone  
    in inducing devotion<sup>3</sup> to God.  
One untouched by avarice, attachment, egoism, and  
    pursuit of evil passions,  
And one risen above joy and sorrow—  
Know such a one to be God's own image.  
Indifferent is he to heaven and hell,<sup>4</sup>  
Amrita and poison, copper<sup>5</sup> and gold;  
So also to praise and calumny;  
Unconcerned with attractions of avarice and attachment.  
One not bound by pain and pleasure—  
Know such alone to be enlightened.<sup>6</sup>  
Saith Nanak: know such a one to be truly liberated.

(*Raga Gauri, p. 220*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, rest.

<sup>2</sup>Refers to religious scriptures in general.

<sup>3</sup>Original, keeping (God's Name) ever before consciousness.

<sup>4</sup>The meaning is that to him devotion is the end, and not attainment of heaven or avoidance of hell.

<sup>5</sup>Original, *paisa*.

<sup>6</sup>Original, *jnani* (gyani)



*Re mana Rama siun kar preet*

My mind, attach thyself in love to the Lord:  
 Let thy ears ever be attentive to the Lord's laudation,  
 And chant thou ever His glory.<sup>1</sup>  
 Seek ever holy company, bear ever in mind the Lord,  
 And be thus exalted from thy fallen state.  
 Behold Death, prowling around  
 Like a terrible beast of prey with fangs showing.<sup>2</sup>  
 One day must it clutch at thee—have no doubt of it.<sup>3</sup>  
 Thus Saith Nanak: Devote thyself to God—  
 Thy life<sup>4</sup> is fast slipping by.

(Raga Sorath, p. 631)

*Re nar ih sachi jiya dhar*

Listen man, grasp firmly this truth:<sup>5</sup>  
 This whole universe is a dream, shattering  
 in an instant.<sup>6</sup>  
 Man labours to build a wall of sand, crumbling  
 soon after:<sup>7</sup>  
 As is this wall, so are pleasures of the world,  
 In which thou art entangled.  
 Wake up<sup>8</sup> before it be too late,  
 Turn to devotion to the Lord.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, sing His praises.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, mouth wide open.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, know it in thy mind.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, occasion.

<sup>5</sup>Original, fix this in thy mind.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, without delay.

<sup>7</sup>Literally, lasts not four days.

<sup>8</sup>Literally, learn this wisdom even yet.

Saith Nanak: I have proclaimed to thee  
The inner<sup>1</sup> truth of the vision of men of God.

(Raga Sorath, p. 633)

*Jo naru dukh main dukh nahin manai*

One who by suffering is unperturbed;  
Not swayed by pleasure, attachment or fear;  
Holds gold and dust alike;  
Is free from gratification at praise or pain at censure;  
Is above avarice, attachment, conceit;  
Is untouched<sup>2</sup> by pleasure and pain;  
Holds praise and dispraise alike;  
Has renounced the lures<sup>3</sup> of the world and covetousness,<sup>4</sup>  
And frees himself from all desire,  
Abjures lust and wrath—  
In the mind of such a one does the Creator<sup>5</sup> dwell.  
By grace of the Lord alone does man  
Learn this way<sup>6</sup> of life.  
Saith Nanak: Such a one is merged into the Lord,  
As water into water.<sup>7</sup>

(Raga Sorath, p. 634)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, special, esoteric thinking.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, rises above.

<sup>3</sup>Original, asa, asha.

<sup>4</sup>Original, mansa, mansha.

<sup>5</sup>Original, brahm, brahman.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, device, practice.

<sup>7</sup>That is, as a river merges into the ocean.



## SLOKAS OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

*Guna Gobind gaiyo nahin janam akarath keen*

Neglecting devotion to God, hast thou made waste of thy life;

Saith Nanak: My self, in love devote thyself to God, as is the fish devoted to water.

Why art thou enamoured of evil courses? Even for a moment hast thou not turned away from these.

Saith Nanak: My self! in love devote thyself to God: And thus escape Yama's noose.

Youth is past; old age has at last overcome this body.

Saith Nanak: My self! in love devote thyself to God: Thy allotted span<sup>1</sup> is coming to a close.

Even in old age are thy eyes still closed;

The hour of death is at hand.

Saith Nanak: Man, maddened by desires—

Why<sup>2</sup> art thou indifferent to God?<sup>3</sup>

Wealth, woman, status—all that thou takest to be thine—

Believe the word of Nanak, none of these shall abide with thee.<sup>4</sup>

Saith Nanak: The Lord, Saviour of the Fallen, Annnuller of Fear, Cherisher of the Helpless—

Know that He ever abides with you.

One who is untouched by joy and sorrow;

By avarice, attachment and egoism—

Saith Nanak: Such a one is indeed the image of God.

<sup>1</sup>Original, Audh (Avadhi) fixed or appointed period.

<sup>2</sup>In the original this line runs: Why dost thou not devote thyself to God?

<sup>3</sup>Original, Bhagavan.

<sup>4</sup>Original, none of these shall accompany thee.

One indifferent to praise and dispraise;  
One to whom gold and iron are alike—  
Saith Nanak: Listen my mind to my words,  
Know such a one to be liberated.

One to whom joy and sorrow are one;  
One who treats friend and foe<sup>1</sup> alike—  
Saith Nanak: Listen my mind to my words,  
Know such a one to be liberated.

One who commits no aggression<sup>2</sup>,  
Nor yields to another's aggression—  
Saith Nanak: Listen my mind to my words,  
Proclaim such a one to be enlightened.

One who has renounced the poison of wordliness,  
And to it has turned indifferent—  
Saith Nanak: Listen my mind to my words,  
Reckon such a one indeed to be truly fortunate.<sup>3</sup>

Rama<sup>4</sup> departed this world,  
So did Ravana of vast progeny.<sup>5</sup>  
Saith Nanak: Nothing lasts—  
The whole world is unreal as dream.

Man may only worry over what can be averted.  
Saith Nanak: On this path of life,<sup>6</sup>  
Nothing is lasting;  
All is evanescent.

<sup>1</sup>Original: foe and friend.

<sup>2</sup>Original: does not terrorize others.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, as bearing marks of good fortune on his forehead.

<sup>4</sup>Reference to Rama, the god-hero of *Ramayana*.

<sup>5</sup>He is said to have had thousands of sons and grandsons.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, world.



All that is created, must one day<sup>1</sup> perish.<sup>2</sup>  
 Saith Nanak: Leave alone all these entanglements;<sup>3</sup>  
 Devote thyself to God.

All<sup>4</sup> strength is gone; thrown in bonds in this frame;  
 No effort may avail.

Prayeth Nanak in this extremity:  
 Lord, you alone are my support;  
 Succour me as you once did the Elephant.<sup>5</sup>

Lo: strength has arrived;<sup>6</sup>  
 The bands are snapped asunder;  
 All efforts begin to avail.  
 Saith Nanak: All is in your hand, Lord:  
 Be you my aid:

Friends and companions have all departed;  
 None has been constant.  
 Prays Nanak: In this hour of agony God is my support.<sup>7</sup>  
 Nothing shall last but God's Name Immortal,  
 The holy devotees of God,

<sup>1</sup>Literally, today or tomorrow.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, must fall.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, Yama's snare—Janjal (Jam-jal) refers in Hindi and Punjabi idiom to a situation from which extrication may not be hoped for.

<sup>4</sup>This couplet is traditionally interpreted as referring to the Guru's incarceration and his firm faith in God in this hour of agony.

<sup>5</sup>Reference to the Puranic legend of the Elephant's rescue by Vishnu.

<sup>6</sup>This couplet, a reply and complement to the preceding, is stated to be the young Guru Gobind Singh's declaration of faith in Divine aid and triumph of the moral law in which man may yet have a sense of victory despite apparent failure and suffering.

<sup>7</sup>Original, *Raghunath*, a periphrastic name for Rama, Lord of the Raghu clan.

And God<sup>1</sup> the support of the universe.  
Saith Nanak: Few in this world are such  
As have devoted themselves to the holy Word of God.

In this hour have I lodged the Name of God in my heart—  
God's Name that is Supreme over all,<sup>2</sup>  
Whose meditation annuls all suffering.  
And favours the devotee with a sight of the Divine Face.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Original, Guru Gobind. Very probably the Guru was meditating on his great son and successor, Gobind Das, who later became Guru Gobind

■ Singh.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, which is unparalleled.

<sup>3</sup>Refers to God, the object of the devotee's contemplation.



five      *The False Vanities of Life*

*Dharti uppar kotgarh keti gae vajai*

Lords of ramparts and forts,  
Who on earth made proclamations of<sup>1</sup> their glory;  
Whose ambition the sky itself did not seem to match—  
In the end were dragged about with halters through their  
noses.<sup>2</sup>

One who is aware of inevitable suffering, would not indulge  
in pleasures.<sup>3</sup>

Saith Nanak: All evil qualities are chains round the neck:

These can be broken<sup>4</sup> only with good qualities—

Those are our true brethren<sup>5</sup> and helpers.

Those uninstructed by the holy Preceptor

Are not honoured in the Hereafter,

And are driven away from God's Portal.

*(Raga Sorath, Guru Nanak, p. 595 Abridged)*

*Lakh lashkar lakh vaje neje lakh utth karain salaam*

Shouldst thou be lord of vast hosts,<sup>6</sup> bands and lances;<sup>2</sup>  
Should all these bow to thee in obedience;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, beat drums of glory.

<sup>2</sup>Refers to the halter driven through the nose of a pack animal.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, would not indulge in partaking of sweet viands.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, cut.

<sup>5</sup>In the original, both words signify 'brother' with the difference in connotation indicated in the rendering.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, army of hundreds of thousands.

<sup>7</sup>Soldiers bearing lances is implied.

Shouldst thou be master of millions who obey thee and make  
obeisance to thee—

With all this, shouldst thou not be honoured in the Divine  
reckoning,

All thy achievement is without worth.

All action but devotion to God<sup>1</sup> is of no value:

One without devotion, with all his learning will remain stark  
blind.<sup>2</sup>

Should one earn millions, hold as much,

Consume vast amounts, earn and spend the same—

Without honour in the Divine reckoning, must he wander  
from birth to birth.

Should one be learned in all the scriptures,<sup>3</sup>

Read and expound them,

Without honour in the Divine reckoning,

All his learning is unapproved.

Devotion to God<sup>4</sup> comes from grace—

From devotion comes true honour.

Should devotion be lodged day and night in the heart,

Man may through grace<sup>5</sup> be liberated.<sup>6</sup>

*(Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 358)*

*Chitte dissain dhaulahar bagge bank duar*

Painted palaces with elegant white portals,

Erected in joy of heart—all fruit of love of Maya—

Without love of God ever shall they remain empty;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, without God's Name.

<sup>2</sup>That is, spiritually blind.

<sup>3</sup>Original, hundreds of thousands of shastras and puranas.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, God's Name.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, glance of grace.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, swim across.



Heaps of rubble, their occupants smouldering ashes.  
 Brother, man's body and wealth last not with him:  
 The purest wealth is God's Name;  
 This comes by Divine grace.  
 The pure wealth of God's Name comes by the Bestower's  
 grace;  
 One befriended by the Creator, Master of all,  
 Shall not be questioned in the next world.  
 Liberation comes from God:  
 He is the Forgiver of sins...  
 As during sleep the sleeper is lost in dream,  
 So the mind gripped in the coils of the she-serpent<sup>1</sup> is caught  
 in egoism and duality.  
 Only by God-given wisdom can one know this world to be  
 a visible dream...  
 Water quietens fire, as the mother's milk the crying babe.  
 Without water the lotus grows not; without water lives not  
 the fish.  
 Saith Nanak: joy in God comes from the Preceptor's teaching.  
 I live only as I chant God's laudation.  
 (*Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 62-63 Abridged*)

*Upjainipjai nipaj samaae*

This visible world arises, falls and in the end vanishes.  
 Before our very eyes this world is vanishing, vanishing.  
 Man! aren't thou ashamed to call the world thy abode?  
 Know that in the end nothing shall be thine!  
 This body, nourished with such manifold effort,  
 In the end shall be consumed in flames of fire.  
 Limbs rubbed over with fragrant oils and sandalwood paste,

<sup>1</sup>The usual image for Maya in Indian spiritual poetry.

Must ultimately burn in a heap of firewood.  
Saith Kabir: Listen thou of good qualities!  
When that day is come,  
Thy beautiful form shall be distorted:<sup>1</sup>  
Have not a doubt of this.<sup>2</sup>

(*Raga Gauri, Kabir, p. 325*)

HYMNS ON *Babar-vani* OR BABAR'S AGGRESSION

Babar, founder of the Mughal ruling dynasty in India, invaded the country several times from 1519 till 1526, when he finally defeated the Delhi Sultan, Ibrahim Lodhi, in the battle of Panipat. Guru Nanak was witness to the orgy of bloodshed and carnage and dishonouring of womenfolk by Babar's soldiers, which according to Sikh chronicles occurred near Saidpur (later called Eminabad) near Gujranwala in Pakistan. The Indian rulers were incompetent and effete and could not defend their land or people.

Guru Nanak's four hymns reproduced here constitute a dirge on India's defeat and a heart-felt cry over the dishonour of Indian womanhood. Withal they embody a sublime prophetic vision of the forces which shape history—the fall of the mighty through their moral degradation. Guru Nanak alone among the saints of India over the centuries had the patriotic impulse and the prophetic vision of the shaping of history by the hand of God. His feeling is for the suffering of all the children of the land—Hindus as well as Muslims—and he raises his cry of protest at the invasion of the land which he calls 'Hindustan.'

The deeper the reader goes into these hymns, the more is

<sup>1</sup>Literally, shall be destroyed.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, the whole world will view this.



he struck by the Guru's mighty vision of the destiny of peoples and nations, whose roots are moral and spiritual.

## I

*Khorasan khasmana kiya Hindustan daraiya*

The Lord protected Khorasan,<sup>1</sup> and subjected Hindustan<sup>2</sup> to terror.

Who shall blame Him for sending the Mughal over this land in the shape of Yama?<sup>3</sup>

The people wailed in their agony of suffering—didst Thou feel no compassion for them,

Thou who art Creator of all?

If a powerful foe molest one equally powerful, little would be there to complain:

But if the ferocious tiger falls upon a herd of kine,

Then must the Master be called to account.<sup>4</sup>

These dogs<sup>5</sup> have thrown away the jewels:<sup>6</sup>

Shameful will be their end;

None will remember them after death.<sup>7</sup>

But what is man's power before God's? He alone joins and unjoins—

Such is His might.

A man proud of his greatness, tasting all life's joys to satiety,

In the eyes of the Lord, is a worm picking grains of corn.

<sup>1</sup>From Babar's attack.

<sup>2</sup>'Hindustan' meant all northern India.

<sup>3</sup>The god of death and retribution.

<sup>4</sup>Note the symbols : Indians are weak (kine). The Master—God—who must protect, rather lets the tyrant loose on them.

<sup>5</sup>The Pathan rulers. The feeling of national indignation and humiliation bursts through these lines.

<sup>6</sup>The Indian humanity.

<sup>7</sup>I.e. they shall in their death be unhonoured and unwept.

Nanak, true success comes to one  
Who from self-abnegation draws life; and utters the Name.  
(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 360*)

II

*Jaisi main awai Khasam ki bani taisra kari gian ve Lalo.*

My cherished Beloved,<sup>1</sup> I speak what the Lord prompts me to utter.

Babar has descended upon India with the wedding party of lust,

And forcibly demands surrender of India's womanhood.

Decency and the Law<sup>2</sup> have hidden themselves;

And evil is strutting about in triumph.

Mohammadan and Hindu priests are discarded, and Satan is making marriages.<sup>3</sup>

The Mohammadan women<sup>4</sup> mutter the Koran, and invoke their God in this hour of distress.

So also are in panic the women of Hindu faith and the lower castes.<sup>5</sup>

Nanak, blood is the theme of the hymnal for such a wedding; Blood is also the saffron paste to suit it.

In this city of corpses, Nanak sings praises of the Lord, and proclaims His Law.

<sup>1</sup>God, to whom is this great song is addressed. Despite the prevalent belief, it is doubtful if a person named 'Lalo' is being addressed by the Guru. 'Lal' in Punjabi idiom (lit. jewel) means a loved one. In the Bhakti idiom, this would be one of the ways of thinking on God, the Beloved. At other places in the Holy Granth that is the sense in which 'Lal jio' is used.

<sup>2</sup>In the original, Dharma. Dharma is the Divine Law, which regulates the universe in accordance with truth and equality.

<sup>3</sup>The orgy of dissolute raping is obviously meant, in a great symbol.

<sup>4</sup>That is, the privileged class of days before the holocaust.

<sup>5</sup>A picture of the sadistic lust let loose on the people by the Mongol and Uzbek soldiery of Babar.



He who made the creation, all in such beautiful aspect,  
 watches it apart, inaccessible.  
 Blameless is the Lord, and true His judgment;  
 Just shall His decree be.  
 The vesture of flesh shall be torn to shreds;  
 India shall remember my word.<sup>1</sup>  
 They come in the year '78 and go out it '97:  
 Another brave hero will arise some day.<sup>2</sup>  
 Nanak utters God's own Word; the hour calls for the truth.  
 (*Raga Telang, Guru Nanak, p. 722*)

## III

*Jin sir sohan pattian mangin pai sandhoor*

Finely coiffeured heads, dyed with vermillion  
 Have been brutally sheared with daggers,  
 Dragged along in clouds of dust.<sup>3</sup>  
 Ladies reared up in palaces are now not allowed a moment  
 of rest.<sup>4</sup>  
 Salutation to Thee, Lord-Creator, Salutation!  
 Primal Purusha!<sup>5</sup>  
 Thy inscrutable will is unknowable;  
 Thou dost enact various scenes in this world.  
 At their wedding these brides  
 Now dragged along in disgrace, were by their Lords' sides,  
 Were carried home in palanquins ivory-studded,  
 Blessed with auspicious pitchers of water,

<sup>1</sup>This cryptic line may be a prophecy of more bloodshed to come—the wages of the sins of a nation which had neglected human values.

<sup>2</sup>This is said to be a prophecy of the expulsion of Humayun in 1597 Bikrami (1540 A.D.) by Sher Shah Suri, a liberal monarch.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, dust fell on them up to the neck (head).

<sup>4</sup>Literally, allowed to sit in the presence of.

<sup>5</sup>For Purusha, see Glossary.

Glamorous fans waving over them;  
Rich gifts presented to them at each movement;<sup>1</sup>  
Munching delectable rich almonds, dates,  
Reclining in soft beds—  
Dragged about now in halters,  
Their pearl-strings shattered, scattered.  
Wealth and beauty have turned deadly foes of those that  
cherished them.  
Commanded the conqueror his minions:  
Drag them all along in disgrace!  
The Lord confers honour  
And chastises as lies in His will.  
Man may escape chastisement by thinking of the consequences  
of his acts.  
The rulers lost their sense in pleasure and frivolity.  
Now was Babar's command supreme:  
Snatch each morsel from these pampered princelings!  
Some their namaz-prayer missed;  
Others their temple-worship.<sup>2</sup>  
For the Hindu women no purified fireplace, no paste-marks,  
ritual bathing.  
In days gone by they thought not on Rama;<sup>3</sup>  
Now even utterance of Khuda<sup>4</sup> is forbidden them.  
A rare one that returned safe,  
Others plied him with questions about their dear ones' safety;  
For others destiny decreed lamentation alone in sorrow.  
Nanak! All happens as He wills;  
What is helpless man?

*(Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 417)*

<sup>1</sup>Literally, as they stood at the husband's threshold, or took their seat.

<sup>2</sup>This line refers to the devastation carried on equally among Hindus and Muslims.

<sup>3</sup>The cruel irony of fate depicted in this line may be noted.

<sup>4</sup>Khuda is, of course, the Muslim name for God.



## IV

*Kahan su khel tabela ghere kahan bheri shahnaee*

Where is now that gambolling, those stables, steeds, drums  
and trumpets?

Where have vanished those sword-straps, chariots, red  
tunics?

Where those hand-mirrors<sup>1</sup> reflecting the faces elegant.

All now gone!

This universe is Thine;

Thou art the Master!

In a moment dost Thou turn it topsy-turvy,

Scattering the amassed gold among the claimants.<sup>2</sup>

Where are those abodes, portals, bowers, palaces?

Where the splendid mansions?

Where those luxurious beds?

Those sweethearts whose sight drove away slumber?

Where those maids purveying betel?

Where those harems?

All vanished as shadows!

Vast multitudes<sup>3</sup> have fallen from grace for lucre,

Been sequestered from God:

It comes not except through sin,

And accompanies not man in death.

The Creator, whosoever He has to forsake,

Deprives him first of goodness.

<sup>1</sup>Refers to an Indian woman's ornament in the form of a small hand-mirror called *arsi*.

<sup>2</sup>Original, brothers; but perhaps collateral rivals and other claimants is meant.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, millions (crores).

Swarms of hermits piled spells to thwart the conqueror's<sup>1</sup>  
advance,

As news spread of him.

Sacred spots of Hindus and Muslims—

Firm stone edifices—nonetheless were burnt.<sup>2</sup>

Princes cut to pieces wept in their affliction.

Not one Mughal was struck blind;<sup>3</sup>

Not one hermit prophesied such devastation.

Battle was joined between Mughals and Pathans;

Freely were the swords plied in battle.

These<sup>4</sup> fired volleys of cannon,

Those led elephant-charges.

Brother, those whose record was torn at the Portal,

Perforce had to die.

Swarms of females—Hindus, Muslims, Bhattis, Rajputs—

Many were in tatters from head to foot;

Many found abode in cremation-yards.

Many whose hero-spouses returned not home,

How passed their nights of sorrow?

The Creator is Ordainer Himself—

To whom may one carry the plaint?

Lord, suffering and joy happen at Thy will—

Where may man relate his tearful tale?

Saith Nanak: The Creator is untouched by sorrow or joy—

His Ordinance runs as He wills—

<sup>1</sup>Original, Mir (Lord) as Babar was known before his assumption of the kingly title.

<sup>2</sup>This amply illustrates Guru Nanak's accurate knowledge of the immense upheavals to which the age was subjected.

<sup>3</sup>Hermits claimed that by their occult powers they could strike the invading Mughals blind.

<sup>4</sup>Refers to the Mughal and Indian weaponry. The Mughals fired volleys, while the Pathan rulers of Delhi made elephant charges.



Man gets what is dastined for him.<sup>1</sup>

(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, pp. 417-18*)

*Jal ki bhit pawan ka thambha rakta boond ka gara*

In man's body the walls are of water,  
 The pillars of air,  
 The mortar of a drop of blood.  
 Its skeleton is of bone, flesh, and nerves—  
 In this house lives the poor bird of his life.  
 Man! nothing here is mine or thine:<sup>2</sup>  
 This life is like the bird's brief perch on the tree.  
 Build high walls,  
 Dig deep foundations as much as you please;  
 In the end the extent of your abode shall be three-and-a-half  
 cubits!  
 With thy hair done in fine style,  
 And thy turban poised at a rakish<sup>3</sup> angle—  
 In the end this body shall be a heap of ashes.  
 Thou mayst possess lofty mansions,  
 A harem of beautiful women—  
 Without devotion to God's Name thy life shall be a losing  
 throw.<sup>4</sup>  
 Low my caste, poor my birth—of no respect am I—  
 I, Ravidas the cobbler pray:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This line refers not to any arbitrary deterministic fate, but to the retribution for actions stored up for man by operation of the Divine Ordinance.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, what is mine and what is thine?

<sup>3</sup>Literally, tilted angle (the fashionable style of doing a turban.)

<sup>4</sup>The imagery here is of course, taken from gambling.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, say.

Lord of the Universe!  
With Thee I seek shelter.

(*Raga Sorath, Ravidas, p. 659*)

*Lab pap due raje mehta koor hoya sikdar*

Avarice is the king; evil-doing his minister,  
Falsehood his revenue-factor;  
Lust is the counsellor, always consulted for advice.  
The subjects are purblind and thoughtless—  
Wretches who foolishly obey these evil rulers.

(*Var Asa, pp. 468-69*)

*Quadi koor bolai mala khaye*

The Quadi<sup>1</sup> speaks falsehood and eats filth.<sup>2</sup>  
The Brahmin, guilty of much cruelty, makes a show of ritual  
bathing.  
The Yogi, blind and misguided, knows not the true practice.  
All three are at one in bringing harm to the people.

(*Raga Dhanasari, Guru Nanak, p. 662*)

#### ON THE FALSITY OF CASTE DISTINCTIONS

*Jati kuleen sevak je hoi*

One among the higher castes, serving God  
Is indeed of great merit:  
But one such from among the castes reckoned low,

<sup>1</sup>Kazi is a Muslim theologian and judge.

<sup>2</sup>Implies illicit income.



May wear shoes made from my flesh!<sup>1</sup>

(Raga Malhar, Guru Nanak, p. 1256)

*Phakkar jati phakkar naon*

Caste is a condemnable notion;

Pride of name is low and mean.

All living beings have their sole support in God.

(p. 83)

*Khasam visaraih te kam-jati*

Those forgetting the Lord are the truly low caste.

Nanak, the fallen are those who live without God.

(p. 349)

*Agai jati na jor hai*

In the Hereafter counts neither caste nor worldly power—

What counts there is purity and not these!

Nanak, they alone are holy whose deeds are entered as such  
in God's reckoning.

(Vas Asa, p. 469)

*Jati baran kul sahsa chooka Gurmati Sabad bichari*

On contemplating the holy Word,

My illusions about caste and class are ended.

(p. 1198)

*Jati janam nah poochiyai Sachghar lehu batai*

Know ye this to be the measure of the Lord:

<sup>1</sup>Guru Nanak's great love for the poor and those reckoned outcaste is expressed through this image.

Caste and birth are not there considered.  
Superiority of caste and worthiness are determined by man's  
deeds.

(p. 1330)

*Janau joti na poochho jati agai jati na hai*

Know all human beings to be repositories of Divine light;  
Stop not to enquire about their caste:  
In the Hereafter there are no castes.

(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 349*)

*Kabuddhi dumani kudaiya kasain*

Evil thinking, hard-heartedness, slander, violence—  
These be the real untouchables:<sup>1</sup>

How is your cooking space pure with these low caste women  
beside<sup>2</sup> you?

True ritual of purity is truthfulness;

Good actions your kitchen-bounds;

Prayer, true holy bath.

Saith Nanak: With God only such are considered noble,  
As preach not to others sinful ritual.

(*Var Sri Rag, Guru Nanak, p. 91*)

*Neechan andar neech jati neechihun ati neech*

The lowliest of the low—the most despised among the  
castes—

Nanak stands by them—he emulates not the great and the  
proud.

<sup>1</sup>In the original several untouchable castes, each personified as an evil, are recounted: Evil thinking is the drummer-woman, hard-heartedness the butcher's wife and so on.

<sup>2</sup>That is, in the kitchen-space, ritually clean for a Hindu.



Lord, Thy grace and mercy fall on the land.  
Where the lowly are cherished.

(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 15)

*Gharibi gada hamari, khanna sagal renu chhari*

Humility is my mace;  
Touching the dust on the feet of all is my spear:  
These weapons no evil-doer can withstand.  
The Perfect Master has equipped me with these.

(Raga Sorath, Guru Arjan, p. 628)

#### NAMDEV AND THE PRIESTS

*Hasat khelat Tere dehure aiya*

With a joyful heart came I into Thy temple.  
While engaged in Thy worship, the priest caught me by the  
hand;

Pushed me out.

King of Yadavas!<sup>1</sup>

Low is my caste;

Why didst Thou curse me with birth in a dyer's home?

Ousted, I picked up my blanket and walked to the rear;

Squatted at Thy temple's back.

Behold, as Nama uttered God's praises,

The Temple turned its front towards Thy devotees!

(Raga Bhairon, Namdev, p. 1164)

<sup>1</sup>Krishna, who belonged to the Yadava race. Here stands for God. This hymn and the following one narrate an incident in Namdev's life. He was ignominiously turned out of the temple for being a low caste man. God in His grace turned the temple-door in the direction of the humiliated Namdev.

*Mo kau Tu na bisar Tu na bisar*

Rama,<sup>1</sup> forsake not me, forsake not!  
These inmates of Thy temple,  
Deluded by their claims of possession  
All fell upon me in wrath,  
Shouting at me, "Shudra; Shudra!"  
They hit me, pushed me outside.  
Father Vithal!<sup>2</sup> What shall I do?  
Shouldst Thou grant me Mukti after death,  
Who will then know of it?  
This manikin Brahmin calls me Shudra!  
What will he then know of Thy grace?  
Thou art known as gracious, merciful—  
Thy arms stretched to succour all, over the universe.  
Thou didst turn the temple-door around to me,  
Discomfiting the Brahmin chaps.  
(*Raga Malhar, Namdev, p. 1292*)

*Nhavan challe tirathin mana khote tan chor*

Some go to sacred places for ablutions, with hearts impure  
and faculties<sup>3</sup> false;<sup>4</sup>  
Ablutions wash one part of them; more impurities attach to  
them again and again.  
They wash their bowels<sup>5</sup> from outside; inside is undiluted  
venom.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stands as elsewhere, for God.

<sup>2</sup>Marathi term for God.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, body.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, thieves.

<sup>5</sup>This is an image.

<sup>6</sup>I.e. poison of evil.



The pure in soul are pure even without ritual bathing;  
The wicked will be wicked with all ritual performances.

(*Var Suhi, Guru Nanak, p. 789*)

# SHEIKH FARID'S VISION OF MAN'S STATE

*Bera bandh na sakion bandhan ki vela*

Listen Man! thou didst not look to the tackle of thy boat  
while it was yet time;

In the lake swollen with tempests, how shall it float?  
Fugitive are pleasures like the Kasumbha<sup>1</sup> flower, burning  
away at a mere touch—

Touch it not, beloved; lest it wither away.

This frail life-female is atremble under the stern accents  
of the master;<sup>2</sup>

He is dragging her away.

Past is youth; never will the breast be brimful again of milk;  
Never again the love embrace.<sup>3</sup>

Saith Farid: Friends, the Master shall summon each one.

The soul must bid its reluctant farewell;

This frame turn to dust.

(*Raga Suhi, Sheikh Farid, p. 794*)

<sup>1</sup>A wild flower whose dye washes off easily.

<sup>2</sup>Death, imagined as the master, or slave-owner.

<sup>3</sup>Devotion, prayer is meant.

GURU NANAK'S HYMN COMPLEMENTARY TO FARID'S

*Jap tap ka bandh belara jit langhai vahela*

Equip thy boat with meditation and austerity to find smooth passage.

To such boat the lake will be as though it is not;  
The tempest will not rise; the crossing will be without peril.  
Thy Name, Beloved, is the fast dye on my gown,  
Fast is the dye Thou has given me!

I have set out to have a sight of the Beloved;  
Shall I see Him ever?

With true love in the heart, He will Himself make the call.  
Those who are merged in Him shall not be cast off.  
He, the holy Master, shall annul transmigration, and keep  
the yearning soul ever near Him.

Those who throw away egoism, make their garments  
acceptable to the Master—

They shall taste the fruit of His Word; to them His Word  
shall be as amrita.

Saith Nanak: My friends, the Master is the sweet Beloved;  
We are His hand-maids; He our True Lord.

*(Raga Suhi, Guru Nanak, p. 729)*

PAMPERING DUST

*Kamini chahai sundar bhog*

The woman seeks indulgence of palate;  
Betel-leaves, fragrance of flowers, and attractive pleasures:  
All these are maladies to the spiritual life.

Pleasure brings only suffering after;  
Those alone find true fulfilment who take refuge in God.

*(Stanza 5)*



*Kapar pahras adhik singar*

Decking oneself with fine clothes and fancy ornaments  
 Is only pampering dust; this beautifying is all in vain.  
 Desires and temptations block the way to God:  
 Void is the home where God's Name is not.

(Stanza 6)

*Gachhau putri rajkuwar*

God, thou, my daughter Princess!<sup>1</sup>  
 Meditate on the True Name, and make thy days fruitful;  
 Serve the Beloved Lord; seek protection in His love;  
 Remove the poisonous thirst for the world by meditating on  
 the Divine Word.

(Stanza 7)

(Raga Basant, Guru Nanak, p. 1187. Abridged)

## ON THE VANITY OF MANKIND

*Mana ka kahiya manasa karai*

Man follows the inclinations of his mind;  
 The mind is unsteady in counselling good and evil.  
 To one intoxicated with the wine of Maya no contentment  
 can come;  
 Contentment and liberation come through attachment to  
 God.<sup>2</sup>  
 Man is proud of physical power, wealth, woman:

<sup>1</sup>This teaching may have been addressed by Guru Nanak to the ladies of some royal household, though the occasion cannot be precisely located.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, the Real.

None of these shall be his in death.  
One may indulge to satiety in pleasures of the flesh;  
His wealth shall fall to others; his body a heap of ashes.  
Dust unto dust shall go; all is vanity.  
Except through God's Name impurity of mind shall not go.  
He who lives unsullied by the world and knows all to be  
God's,  
He who dedicates body and soul to Him whose it is—  
Such a one shall not be subject to transmigration.  
Nanak; such a one indeed is pure and shall be  
immersed in God.

*(Raga Bilawal, Guru Nanak, p. 832)*

*Jag kauwwa Nam nahin cheet*

Mankind is crow-like, forgetful of Truth;  
Forgetting Truth, it swoops down on crumbs.  
The mind strays ever in impure thoughts.  
I have broken free of false love of the world.  
Lust and wealth are poisons—heavy and hard.  
Without absorption in Truth how may one acquire noble  
qualities?  
This life is a house of sand built on a whirlpool;  
Like a bubble just visible in torrential rain.  
In substance a drop, moulded in form on God's wheel:  
Know all life to be slave to the Real.<sup>1</sup>

*(Raga Basant, Guru Nanak, 1187)*

<sup>1</sup>I.e. nothing in itself, but entirely dependent on God, the only Reality.



*Raje raiyat sikdar koi na rahasiyo*

Kings, subjects, lords—  
 None shall last;  
 Rich stores, squares, markets—  
 All by Divine command shall collapse.  
 Firm edifices, portals,  
 The ignorant fool reckons his own—  
 Not knowing, treasures overflowing with wealth  
 May in an instant be denuded.  
 Arab steeds, chariots, camels, elephants, housings,  
 Gardens, lands, mansions—  
 All these possessions—  
 Where are they?  
 Tents, luxurious beds, damask<sup>1</sup> curtains—  
 All, all vanished.  
 Saith Nanak: The Bestower of all alone abides—  
 By His might may He be known.

*(Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 141)*

#### THE END OF POMP AND VANITY

*Gehri kar kai neev khudae upar mandap chhai*

Over deep-dug foundations hast thou erected lofty mansions.  
 Answer: Wilt thou live longer than Markandaya,<sup>2</sup>  
 Who sheltered under a single blade of grass?  
 Our true friend is Rama the Creator.  
 Man, what art thou so much proud of?  
 This mortal frame will one day be destroyed.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, silken.

<sup>2</sup>A rishi who lived for nine hundred years.

Brother! Kauravas<sup>1</sup> with Duryodhana<sup>2</sup> for brother—  
All sought more and more;  
The umbrella over his head spanned twelve yojanas:<sup>3</sup>  
His end? His rotting corpse pecked at by vultures!  
Mighty Ravana<sup>4</sup>, lord of the golden Lanka<sup>5</sup>—  
What availed him his train of elephants?  
All in a moment taken away.  
The Yadavas<sup>6</sup> seeking to fool Durbasa<sup>7</sup> came to what end!  
God has shown mercy to His servant Namdev,  
And engaged him in devotion to Himself.  
(*Raga Dhanasari, Namdev, p. 692-693*)

*Jis neech kau koi na janai*

One lowest of the lowly, spurned<sup>8</sup> by all,  
By devotion to God's Name  
In all four directions shall be honoured.  
Beloved Lord! I seek a sight of Thee.  
All who served Thee have attained liberation.<sup>9</sup>  
One whose very touch all avoid,<sup>10</sup>  
Through devotion becomes deeply venerated.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A proud royal race, mentioned in *Mahabharata*.

<sup>2</sup>The King of Kauravas, an arrogant tyrant.

<sup>3</sup>A distance equal to about three miles.

<sup>4</sup>The proud demon-king, adversary of Rama whose story is told in *Ramayana*.

<sup>5</sup>Now known as Sri Lanka.

<sup>6</sup>The tribe to which Krishna belonged.

<sup>7</sup>A rishi who cursed the Yadava race.

<sup>8</sup>Literally, whom no one recognizes or honours.

<sup>9</sup>Literally, who that served Thee have not been carried across?

<sup>10</sup>Here the suggestion is of untouchability, as also in the first line : Even an untouchable by devotion is rendered holy.

<sup>11</sup>Literally, all rub and wash his feet.



One who is reckoned utterly worthless,  
 Through grace of the holy becomes object of worship.  
 In holy company the mind asleep is awakened,  
 And love<sup>1</sup> of the Lord's Name is aroused.

(Raga Asa, Guru Arjan, p. 386)

# FROM RAMKALI DAKHNI OANKAR<sup>2</sup>

*Chanchal cheet na rahae thai*

The Mind, restless, is not fixed in poise;  
 Like the deer it seeks to nibble at green shoots.  
 One devoting his heart to God's lotus feet  
 Grows long-lived, and is ever soul-awakened.  
 The whole world is in anxiety's grip—  
 Joy comes only from contemplating God.<sup>3</sup>  
 Should man lodge God in mind, and be absorbed in Him,  
 Emancipation shall come to him,  
 And in honour shall be return to his celestial home.<sup>4</sup>  
 (Stanza 23, p. 932)

*Taruvar kaiya pankhi mana taruvar pankhee panch*

This body is a tree; the mind, a bird.  
 On this tree are perched five<sup>5</sup> birds.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, the lord's Name is rendered sweet.

<sup>2</sup>*Ramkali Dakhni Oankar* is a deeply meditative composition of Guru Nanak in the measure Ramkali. It expresses high philosophical and moral truths, and epitomizes within its 54 stanzas the vision of Guru Nanak.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, the One.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, go to his abode.

<sup>5</sup>This refers to the five faculties of knowledge.

Such of these as pick up the Essence,  
Get not caught in the snare.  
Those rushing around, seeking plenty of grain,  
Find their wings broken,  
Are caught in the snare,  
And involved in great suffering.  
From the snare no escape comes except by God's grace—  
The jewel of God-realization<sup>1</sup> is attained by Divine grace.  
The mighty Provider alone may bestow liberation.  
By Divine grace and compassion may liberation be attained.  
All merit lies in His grasp—  
This may be attained only as He wills it.

(Stanza 33, p. 934)

*Khima vihune khap gae khuhani lakh asankh*

Those who abjured forgiveness, despite their vast cohorts  
were effaced from the earth,  
Countless their number,  
Hard to enumerate.  
He who realizes the Master is liberated, never again to be  
bound.  
To know the true Word is to be approved in the celestial  
mansion.  
True joy comes from forgiveness and truthful living.  
Expend ye the true wealth of meditation;  
Attain thus the poised mind.  
Repeat ever God's Name with your mind, body, and tongue:  
Thus may ye cultivate noble qualities and a mind forbearing.  
Egoism shall be destroyed and destroy its possessor;  
Its seed must sprout into worthless weeds.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, the jewel of godly qualities and grace.



God, who created all creatures, has put Himself into each;  
Yet is He apart from all.

(Stanza 37, p. 937)

### PAHRE—THE HOURS

This composition of Guru Nanak, deeply compassionate in tone, contains his vision of man's life on earth. Its essence centres on the tragic waste that unawakened man makes of his life's opportunity to engage in devotion and noble endeavour. "Merchant-Friend" recurring in the text is the way of apostrophizing the human self. Man sojourns on the earth to make a "profitable" or "losing" bargain in earning merit or wasting his life in sin.

#### I

In the first hour of night, my Merchant-Friend, by  
Divine will wast thou cast into the womb;  
Suspended by the head, thou didst undergo penance therein—  
supplicating the Master for release:  
Suspended downward thou didst supplicate and absorb thy  
thought in the Master.  
Camest thou in shame into the world; unclad shalt thou  
return.  
Man gets what is recorded in his destiny.<sup>1</sup>  
Saith Nanak, in the first hour was man cast in the womb.

In the second hour of night, Merchant-Friend, hast thou put  
God out of mind.  
By diverse hands wast thou fondled with love as Krishna in  
the home of Yashodha.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, recorded by the pen of God on his forehead.

<sup>2</sup>The adopted mother of Krishna.

By diverse hands fondled, thou bubble of breath, thy mother  
showered love on thee!

Think, think thou involved in forgetfulness, nothing shall  
last with thee;

He who created thee, Him hast thou forgotten—contemplate  
Him with thy mind!

Saith Nanak, in the second hour hast thou put God out of  
Mind!

In the third hour of night, Merchant-Friend, thy heart is  
fixed on wealth and desire;

Thou thinkest not on God, liberator from bondage.<sup>1</sup>

Forgetful of God, thou wanderest in Maya's maze.

Lured by wealth and drunk in desire, thou hast cast thy life  
away.

Thy merchandise hath not been Righteousness; nor Friend,  
hast engaged in good deeds.

Saith Nanak, in the third hour is man absorbed in wealth  
and desire.

In the fourth hour of night, the Reaper comes to the field.

Led by Yama's minions, Merchant-Friend, none knows thy  
destination.

In the grip of Yama's minions, none knoweth the why or  
where.

Victims of illusion would cry round thy bier—in a moment  
wouldst thou, a stranger, be cast off.

Thy attainment would be as thy desire in life.<sup>2</sup>

Saith Nanak: Listen thou man: in the fourth hour the Reaper  
comes to reap the field.

*(End of First movement)*

<sup>1</sup>This is a rendering. Transmigration is meant.

<sup>2</sup>i.e. retribution would be as the course of life had been.



## II

In the first hour of night, Merchant-Friend, is the infant in ignorance engulfed;

He sucks milk, is fed and, Merchant-Friend, wrapped in father-mother's affection.

Mother and father hold the infant in affection abounding—all Maya's illusion.

Good fortune hath brought him the human incarnation, reward of good deeds—now again involved in the round of action:

Emancipation may come not without devotion to God—attachment to world is perdition.

Saith Nanak in the first hour: Man, meditate on God—that alone may bring liberation.

In the second hour of night, Merchant-Friend, art thou intoxicated with the wine of youth, full to brim;

Day and night pursuing desire, Merchant-Friend, in blindness minding not God.

Thy mind forgetful of God, absorbed in pleasures sweet and bitter.<sup>1</sup>

Without enlightenment, meditation, inclination to restraint—wrapped in falsehood, shall your birth and death be unending.

Ablutions, fasts, codes of purification,

Ritual actions—not these be worship;

Saith Nanak: Emancipation follows love and devotion—in dualism lies transmigration.

In the third hour of night, Merchant-Friend, swans settle on the pool's marge—

Youth melts, old age wins, Merchant-Friend; life runs out, day declines.

<sup>1</sup>The sources of pleasure lie in experiences agreeable and disagreeable.

In the last hour, thou blind of sight, shalt thou repent,  
gripped by Yama's minions;  
All thy coveted possessions in a moment shall fall away from  
thee.

Thoughtless and foolish, evil deeds shall bring thee only regret.  
Saith Nanak: Listen Man, in the third hour deeply meditate  
on God.

In the fourth hour of night, Merchant-Friend, shalt thou  
grow old, thy limbs enfeebled;  
Thy eyes deprived of sight, thy ears dead to sound;  
Eyes blinded, palate gone tasteless, thy strength and effort gone:  
How may one without merit get joy? For the unbeliever<sup>1</sup> is  
transmigration.

The crop ripened, snaps and falls—in the hour of departure,  
pride all snaps broken.  
Saith Nanak: Man, in the fourth hour seek Divine grace to  
know Him.

At last comes breathing to end, Merchant-Friend;  
Old age, of great might stands at thy shoulder.  
My Merchant-Friend, thou didst not absorb a grain of merit;  
thy demerits shall haul thee away bound:  
Whoever through restraint hath garnered merit shall not  
suffer; nor be born and die.  
Death and Yama's snare touch him not; through loving  
devotion and fear he swims across.<sup>2</sup>  
With honour he departs and in supreme peace is absorbed in  
God—all his sorrows annulled.  
Saith Nanak: Listen Man, by Divine grace does man find  
liberation; from the Eternal finds honour.

(*Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 74 to 76*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, ego-guided one.

<sup>2</sup>"Fear" is fear of God; "swimming" is emancipation from transmigration.



## *The Sublime Path of Spiritual Ascent*

FROM SUKHMANI

*Sukhmani* (The Path of Bliss) is a text in twenty-four cantos (ashtpadis) of Guru Arjan's composition. Each canto consists of eight stanzas (pauris) of ten couplets, preceded by a sloka (aphoristic verse) spelling out the theme of the succeeding canto. This composition, recited and meditated upon constantly by Sikhs and Hindus seeking peace of mind and spiritual content, states in verse whose rhythm itself has a soothing effect on the troubled mind, the essentials of the path of spiritual ascent. Opening with *Simran*, meditation, it leads the seeker by ascending steps to self-purification through forgiveness, universal love and charity, to that state of illumination (*Brahm-Jnan*) wherein the self merges with the Absolute, and becomes one with it. Recourse to reciting this composition is had at all times when the suffering of life becomes oppressive. Particularly is it recited by the side of the sick when life is slowly ebbing out of enfeebled limbs and man's hope lies solely in Divine grace. The extracts given below are aimed at leading the seeker to immerse himself in this great text, which is available in English translation.

*Jih marag ke gane janhi na kosa*

On the unending immeasurable path of death,  
Devotion to God<sup>1</sup> is man's sure provision;  
On that frightening path, obscured by smoke and dust,  
Devotion to God is the source of light.

<sup>1</sup>Original, God's Name.

On the Path where friend thou hast none,  
Devotion to God is thy true helper.<sup>1</sup>  
On that way where terrible heat will oppress thee,  
Devotion to God will give thee cooling shade.  
There where unbearable thirst will suffocate thee,  
Saith Nanak: God's Name showers joyful amrita.

(*Gauri Sukhmani, II. 4, Guru Arjan, p. 264*)

*Brahm-Gyani sada nirlep*

The divinely enlightened<sup>2</sup> are ever immaculate,  
As is the lotus<sup>3</sup> untouched in water.  
The divinely enlightened are not tainted by partiality,  
As the sun which equally warms<sup>4</sup> all objects.  
The divinely enlightened view all without malice or favour,  
As the air blowing alike over king and beggar.  
The divinely enlightened stay ever in poise,  
As is the earth to him who digs it,  
And to him who plasters it over with sandal-paste.  
The state of the divinely enlightened  
Is like fire, ever-unchanging.

(*Gauri Sukhmani, VIII.1, Guru Arjan, p. 272*)

*Sagal purakh menh purakh Pardhan*

Preeminent among men is the man  
Whose egoism is shed in holy company;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, acquaintance, friend.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Brahm-gyani (jnani).

<sup>3</sup>The image of the lotus untouched by water also occurs in *Gita*—V. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, dries up, evaporates.



One believing himself to be lowly and humble,  
 Is in truth supreme among all.  
 One who cultivates the utmost humility<sup>1</sup>  
 Will behold God's Reality<sup>2</sup> in each being.  
 One who banishes evil from his own mind  
 Shall towards all bear friendship.  
 Such a one shall view joy and sorrow alike;  
 Neither good actions nor evil shall touch him.<sup>3</sup>

(*Gauri Sukhmani, III. 6, Guru Arjan, p. 226*)

*So Pundit jo mana parbodhai*

The true Pundit<sup>4</sup> is one who instructs his self,  
 And fixes firm God's Name in his mind;  
 One who quaffs the pure nectar of God's Name,  
 The teaching of such sustains the world.  
 The Pundit who lodges in his soul<sup>5</sup> divine teaching,<sup>6</sup>  
 Shall not again be born.  
 The true Pundit is one who realizes the essence of Vedas,  
 Puranas and Simritis,<sup>7</sup>  
 And views the palpable in the subtle.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, one whose mind touches the dust of the feet of all.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, Name.

<sup>3</sup>The implication is that he shall have entered the 'Fourth State' or Turiya wherein man is incapable of discriminatory treatment to any.

<sup>4</sup>Pundit is the honorific form of address for a Brahmin. The Guru herein defines the qualities of one truly deserving of this style of address.

<sup>5</sup>Original, heart.

<sup>6</sup>Original, the story or narrative of God. Holy texts is implied.

<sup>7</sup>Religious scriptures in general are implied.

<sup>8</sup>Reference is to a cardinal doctrine of Indian philosophy. The truly enlightened person views all existence as one, is a monist (The terms in original are Sukham (Sukshama) and Asthool (Sthula).

One whose teaching is directed to all four castes,  
Nanak makes obeisance to such a Pundit!

*(Gauri Sukhmani, IX. 4, Guru Arjan, p. 274)*

*Prabhu ki agiya atam hitavai*

One in whose soul love of the Lord's commandment is  
lodged,

Is truly a liberated self.<sup>1</sup>

To him are joy and sorrow alike;

Ever in bliss, never is he away from the Divine Presence.

Alike to him are gold and a clod of clay;

Alike too amrita and nauseous<sup>2</sup> poison.

Alike to him are honour and neglect,<sup>3</sup>

Alike king and beggar.

One whose life falls into such mould,

Saith Nanak, is truly a liberated self.

*(Gauri Sukhmani, IX. 7, Guru Arjan, p. 275)*

*Sarb dharam menh sresht dharam*

The purest of all religions consists in devotion to God's  
Name

And purity of action.

The noblest of all acts

Is removal of foul thinking<sup>4</sup> in holy company.

<sup>1</sup>Original, Jivan-Mukta (one liberated while living in the corporeal body).

<sup>2</sup>Literally, sour, of offensive taste.

<sup>3</sup>The original word also implies dishonour; but neglect appears to be closer to the true sense.

<sup>4</sup>Implies the influence of duality on the mind; in other words attachment to the world.



The noblest of endeavours  
 Is constant meditation on God's Name.  
 Among speeches the speech ambrosial  
 Is propagation of Divine laudation in the world.  
 The holiest of all spots, Nanak,  
 Is the heart in which devotion to God<sup>1</sup> abides.  
*(Gauri Sukhmani, Guru Arjan, III. 8, p. 266)*

### THE ANAND

The *Anand* (Bliss, Joy) is a text in forty stanzas (pauris) giving expression to the joy felt in the soul through a life of devotion to God and discarding of worldliness (Maya). The path of ascent outlined in this text, each one of whose stanzas follows a uniform pattern with a lilting rhythm, is to seek illumination and bliss through renunciation of material distractions. In this text, the highest peaks of Indian spiritual thought are scaled. This is a path which is universal no less than Indian, in guiding the human self to the sublime spiritual experience which is above all forms of creeds.

*Ai mana chanchala chaturae kinai na paiya*

Listen thou, my ingenious mind!  
 None ever attained realization by feats of intellect.  
 Listen thou carefully:  
 None ever realized God by arguing.  
 This Maya is delusive, spreading doubts to mislead the  
 mind—  
 This delusive Maya is itself God's own creation.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, God's Name.

May I be a sacrifice to him who has created this wonderful<sup>1</sup> delusion.

Saith Nanak: Listen my ingenious mind!  
None ever attained Him by the intellect.

(Stanza 10)

*Karmi sahj na upjai bin sahjai sahsa na jae*

From ritual practices comes not God-realization;  
Without realization doubts get not dispelled.  
By no discipline is doubt dispelled;  
All his actions<sup>2</sup> still cling to man,  
In doubt is the mind kept impure.  
By what discipline may this be dispelled?  
Cleanse the mind, attach yourself to God's Word;  
Engage your consciousness with God.  
Saith Nanak: Realization comes by Divine Grace—  
By this means would doubt be dispelled.

(Stanza 18)

*Ai rasna tu anrasa rach rahi teri piyas na jae*

My tongue!<sup>3</sup> thou art involved with other<sup>4</sup> tastes—  
This satisfaction will not end thy craving.<sup>5</sup>  
This craving will not go until thou attain the taste of joy in  
God.  
By tasting of joy in God, by abiding in it,

<sup>1</sup>Literally, sweet.

<sup>2</sup>Reference is to be consequences of actions clinging to man birth after birth, till liberated through God-realization.

<sup>3</sup>The tongue as medium of taste is implied, i.e. the palate.

<sup>4</sup>That is, of the world.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, thirst.



Never again wilt thou feel craving for any other.  
 This joy in God comes from earned merit;<sup>1</sup>  
 One in union with God alone will experience it.  
 Saith Nanak: All other tastes are discarded<sup>2</sup>  
 When God takes abode in man's mind.

(Stanza 32)

(*Ramkali Anand, Guru Amardas, p. 918, 919, 921*)

*Guru-sagar ratni bharpure*

God the Ocean is full of pearls;  
 This amrita His devotees pick up; never are they far from  
 Him.  
 They pick up nectar of Divine joy, by Divine grace.  
 In this pool these Swans<sup>3</sup> find their Lord.<sup>4</sup>  
 The wretched heron only wallows in a muddy pond,<sup>5</sup>  
 Plunges into its slush which washes not his filth.  
 The wise<sup>6</sup> take each step with great care;  
 They have cast off duality and taken to worship of the  
 Formless.  
 They taste of the nectar of Divine joy, which brings  
 liberation—  
 Their transmigration annulled, God has preserved them.  
 The Swan gives not up the Pool,  
 And is through loving devotion absorbed into God-  
 consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Earned merit': Karma in the original. Actions of previous births constituting merit are referred to.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, are forgotten.

<sup>3</sup> Swan is the accepted image in Indian thought for the uplifted soul.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, Lord of life.

<sup>5</sup> Implies the world and its objectives.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, the thoughtful; the contemplative.

<sup>7</sup> Original, Sahj (see Introduction).

The swan is in the Pool; the Ocean<sup>1</sup> in the Swan.  
Inexpressible their tale; through the Divine Word they get  
honour.

A Yogi resides in the Realm of silence:<sup>2</sup>  
Neither woman nor man is He—how may one designate  
Him?

The three worlds in contemplating His Light are absorbed;  
Gods, men, yogis—all seek shelter with that holy Reality.  
He is the root of all bliss; shelter of the shelterless;  
By Divine grace through meditation is He realized.  
He the Cherisher of His devotees, Annuler of all worldly  
fear—

Man finds union with Him by eliminating his ego,  
Thus treading His Path.

Despite all ritual performances, death's torment still remains:  
Man has come into this terrestrial sphere with death destined  
for him;

Through duality he wastes his valuable life;  
Not contemplating his self, he suffers<sup>3</sup> through doubt.  
Man should utter, study, and hear nothing but the one Reality,  
And rest in poise, righteousness, and the Supporter of the  
earth

And his heart be absorbed in chastity<sup>4</sup> and self-discipline—  
Should his mind be attached to the state of God-absorption.<sup>5</sup>  
Those ennobled and purified by God get not soiled by the  
filth of the world;

By the Divine Word is their doubt and fear dispelled;

<sup>1</sup>Pool and Ocean herein both stand for the Infinite.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Sunn (Shunya) mandal. The realm of nothingness where all  
duality ceases.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, wails.

<sup>4</sup>Original, jat, sat.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, The Fourth State (Turiya) wherein the soul is absorbed in  
the Supreme.



Nanak yearns for a sight of the Divine Essence—  
The Form that is Primal, Eternal.

(*Raga Dhanasari, Guru Nanak, p. 685-86*)

*Nirmal Kaiya Ujjal Hansa*

In the chaste body resides the pure soul;  
Pervading it is the essence of the Immaculate Name.  
One with such body and soul  
Drinks in all suffering as though amrita,  
And is never again by suffering tormented.

(*Stanza 6*)

*Bahu sadon dukh prapat howai*

Suffering comes from excess of pleasure.  
Indulgence is a malady, bringing obloquy;  
From pleasure comes unending pain;  
The votary of pleasure wanders from birth to birth,  
Unmindful of God's will.

(*Stanza 7*)

*Gyan vihuni bhawai sabaae*

The entire world wanders about in delusion,  
In the darkness of spiritual ignorance;  
Inside all God is pervasive, ever awake;  
One who realizes the fear-consuming Word of God,  
His self merges as light into the Light Divine.

(*Stanza 8*)

*Atal adol atol Murari*

God<sup>1</sup> is eternal, immutable, incompassable;

<sup>1</sup>Original: Murar=Murari.

In an instant He destroys and creates;  
Has neither form nor feature,  
Is immeasurable, beyond comprehension;<sup>1</sup>  
By piercing the secret of His Word may man find poise.  
(Stanza 9)

*Ham dasan ke das Piare*

Beloved God! we are slaves of Thy slaves;  
Those who endeavour to realize Thee, are holy, pure, and  
truly wise:  
One reposing faith in the Name shall truly be victorious—  
God Himself prompts man to realize Truth.  
(Stanza 10)

*Palle Shahu sache sachiara*

Those whose capital is truth, are pure and holy;  
God is pleased with those who love His truth;  
He has made truth the support of the three worlds—  
Truth alone wins His favour.  
(Stanza 11)

*Wada wada akhai sabh koi*

Each one considers himself great,  
Without the Preceptor none acquires illumination;  
One absorbed in Truth alone pleases God.  
Never is he separated from Him, and suffers never.  
(Stanza 12)

*Dhuruh vichhunne dhahin runne*

Those alienated from God since the primal hour cry bitterly;  
They die and are born, bound by time:

<sup>1</sup>Literally, his worth not knowable.



God grants merit to him on whom His grace descends—  
One finding union with Him is free from sorrows.

(Stanza 13)

*Ape karta Ape bhugta*

He creates and Himself enjoys the creation;  
And is ever fulfilled and ever unattached;  
He is bestower of the gift of liberation,  
And annuller of egoism and delusion.

(Stanza 14)

*Danan kai sir dan vichara*

I have found Thy gifts supreme over all;  
Thou art all-powerful, illimitable.  
Thou dost what pleases Thee—  
Fulfilling Thy design.

(Stanza 15)

*Se guna gawahi Sache bhawahi*

They alone chant God's praises who please Him;  
Created by Thee, in Thee they merge;  
Nanak expresses this holy Truth:  
In union with the Eternal lies all joy.

(Raga Maru Solahe, Guru Nanak, p. 1034-35 Stanza 16)

*Khima gahi brat seel santokham*

God's devotees have taken the vow of forgiveness,  
Noble conduct and contentment:  
On this path are they exempt from maladies<sup>1</sup> and Yama's malice;

<sup>1</sup>Spiritual maladies like greed, envy, despair etc.

And are liberated, merged in God who is without form or feature.

What fear should the *true* yogi have?

Trees and all that is visible are only God's *form*.

The yogi emancipated from fear contemplates the immaculate Supreme Being;

Each day his mind is awake;

In the Eternal is he absorbed,

A yogi of such qualities pleases me.

He would burn away the snare of death in the fire of Divine Realization,

Would annul decline of age, death and the path of egoism;

Liberated himself, he would liberate<sup>1</sup> also his forbears.

The true yogi is one who serves the true Preceptor.

One living in fear of God is rendered truly fearless:

One becomes as the object he worships.

The Immaculate Creator<sup>2</sup> alone may be called fearless;

The defenceless He succours:<sup>3</sup>

May I be a sacrifice to him.

For one chanting His praises transmigration ceases.

The true yogi is one who realizes the identity of his self

With all that exists,

And through the Divine Word has a vision of his true self.

Through absorbing the true Word is he marked with

approval at the Divine Portal.

One dying<sup>4</sup> through the Word abides in his true home;<sup>5</sup>

Neither is he born nor dies;

His desire is annulled;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, carries across.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, the Puissant Male, the Creator.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, becomes their master, guardian.

<sup>4</sup>That is, renouncing worldly desires etc.

<sup>5</sup>That is, in poise.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, all who are visible.



Through the Divine Word the lotus of his heart blooms.  
 Each one is actuated by desire and fear,<sup>1</sup>  
 Lust, violence and the poison of craving.<sup>2</sup>  
 Saith Nanak: Rare are those who have truly overcome  
 attachment.

(Raga Gauri, Guru Nanak, p. 223-24)

*Hum dolat beri pap bhari hai pawan lagai matu jae*

I,<sup>3</sup> a sin-laden boat tossed about in the storm,  
 In fear of sinking with every gale:  
 For a sight of Thee have I come.  
 Lord of all bliss!  
 Exalt me with the blessing of faith.  
 Thou Saviour!<sup>4</sup> Save me!  
 May I be a sacrifice to Thee!  
 Grant me Thy devotion, Thou who art perfect, immortal.  
 Siddhas, sadhakas, yogis, wandering hermits<sup>5</sup>—  
 All who meditate on the One Source of All Bliss,  
 All who learn the secret of the exalted Word—  
 At the touch of Thy holy feet are saved.  
 I practise no ritual of the creeds;<sup>6</sup>  
 My only devotion meditation on Thee.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, loss of hope.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, hunger and thirst.

<sup>3</sup>Original, Hum which in the Hindi idiom would serve for 'I'.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, Rower across the ocean of worldliness.

<sup>5</sup>Various orders of anchorites.

<sup>6</sup>In the original the rituals mentioned are japa (ritual chanting of holy texts), tapa (austerities), sanjam (practice of austerities) karma (ordained sacrifices etc.).

Nanak has had a sight of the true preceptor, the Supreme  
Lord,

Whose holy Word alone saves.<sup>1</sup>

(*Raga Ramkali, Guru Nanak, p. 878*)

*So sanyasi jo Satiguru sevai vichon Ap gawai*

The true Sanyasi is one who serves God and discards egoism;  
Seeks not food and clothing,

Gets whatever happens to come to him;

One who wags not his tongue overmuch,

Gathers the wealth of forgiveness,<sup>2</sup>

And burns his lower passion in the fire of the Name.

Praised be all whose heart is attached to God's feet—

Be they householders, sanyasis or yogis.

(*Stanza 7*)

*As nirasrahai Sanyasi ekas suin liv lawai*

The true Sanyasi is emancipated from craving and fear<sup>3</sup>

And attaches his heart to God alone;

In quaffing Divine nectar he finds peace,

And is absorbed in God, his true abode.<sup>4</sup>

His mind wanders not;

By Divine prompting he acquires true knowledge,

And stills his restless mind;

His self<sup>5</sup> he searches with God-given wisdom

And finds there in the wealth of the Name.

(*Raga Maru, Guru Nanak, p. 1013, Stanza 8*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, Annuls transmigration. <sup>2</sup>That is, enriches his soul by being forgiving. <sup>3</sup>Literally, hope and despair. <sup>4</sup>That is, where his soul must rest.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, house of his body.



*Kaun so mukta kaun so jugta*

Who is truly liberated? Who truly to God united?  
 Who is the illuminated one?  
 Who the true exponent of scriptures?  
 Who is the householder? Who the world-renouncer?  
 Who has realized God's greatness?  
 How is one bound; how liberated?  
 How is birth and rebirth annulled?  
 Who in Karma engaged? Who has broken free of it?  
 Who is joyful? Who sorrowful?  
 On whom shines God's presence? Who away from it?  
 How to God be united? How be thrown apart?  
 Who to make this manifest?  
 What the word to still the restless mind?  
 What the teaching whereby joy and sorrow be alike borne?  
 What the path leading to meditation on God?  
 To chanting His praise?

Those God-instructed<sup>1</sup> are liberated;  
 Those God-instructed to Him united.  
 Those God-instructed are illuminated;  
 Of scriptures the true exponents.  
 The God-instructed is true householder, world-renouncer;  
 To him is God's greatness revealed.  
 Man in egoism is bound;  
 One instructed by God is liberated.  
 Of the God-instructed is the birth-cycle annulled.  
 Of the God-instructed the Karma is holy;  
 The God-instructed is of Karma liberated—  
 All his Karma too approved of the Divine will.  
 The God-instructed are truly joyful, the egoists miserable.  
 On the God-instructed falls God's light;

<sup>1</sup>Original, Gurumukh (God-facing). See Glossary.

The egoist keeps facing away from God.  
The God-instructed are truly united;  
To the God-instructed is known the path of renunciation.  
The God-instructed reveal the way.<sup>1</sup>  
The God-inspired Word stills the restless mind;  
Through Divine instruction is man enabled to bear joy and  
sorrow alike.

Of the Divinely-instructed is the way to meditation,  
To chanting God's praise.  
He Himself has fashioned all;  
By His will He created everything:  
Himself alone He turned into innumerable forms;  
Into Him shall all these be merged.

*(Raga Majh, Guru Arjan, p. 131)*

*Vidya vichari tan par-upkari*

Learning with meditation induces in the mind service of  
mankind;<sup>2</sup>

The true purifying bath is the subduing of passion;  
The mind in tune with the Infinite will hear the mystic  
melody.<sup>3</sup>

For such a one Yama's terror has no reality.  
The true Sanyasi is one who has renounced desire;  
From continence comes true joy of living.

One contemplating to subdue the flesh is the truly  
compassionate Jain ascetic.

Such a one is not guilty of violence to another;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, manner, way of life.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, of others.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, the sound of (mystic) bells. This is believed to be heard by  
great yogis.



His lower self he suppresses.<sup>1</sup>

Thou Lord, art One alone—

Many are Thy forms.

Thy manifold play is beyond Nanak's comprehension.

(Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 356)

*Ih neesani sadhu ki jis bhetat tariyai*

By this sign know ye a holy man:

His very sight leads to liberation;<sup>2</sup>

Through his teaching Yama's minions shall not approach a  
believer,

Nor shall he die.<sup>3</sup>

Through him the ocean of existence,

Full of the poison of the world may be crossed;

Friend! string into your mind's rosary the noble attributes of  
God—

Thus shall your impurities be removed.

Saith Nanak: Union will thus come about with the

Transcendent Lord,<sup>4</sup> the Beloved, the supremely Mighty.<sup>5</sup>

(Var Gauri, Guru Arjan, p. 320)

*Baikunthnagar jahan sant vasa*

Paradise is where God's devotees reside,

In whose hearts abides love of the Lord's lotus-feet.

Listen to their story with all thy heart—

<sup>1</sup>Literally, himself he dies (used figuratively).

<sup>2</sup>Literally, swimming across.

<sup>3</sup>Spiritual death or transmigration is implied.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Par-Brahm.

<sup>5</sup>Original, Nar-Har i.

Thus wilt thou find real joy.

Thus mayst thou also delight in the delicacies of devotion to God.

Partake in thy mind of the ambrosial Name of God,  
Whose wondrous joys are inexpressible.

As avarice died, craving too was extinguished.

The servant of God sought shelter with the Supreme;<sup>1</sup>

Fears and delusions of numerous births have been cast off,

And on Nanak His Servant, God has showered grace.

*(Raga Suhi, Guru Arjan, p. 742)*

*Brahmin khatri sud vaish char varna char ashram hain  
Jo Hari dhiyavai so pardhan*

Brahmin, Kshatriya, Sudra and Vaishya—

Four are the castes;

Four the stages<sup>2</sup> of life—

None is holy by birth:

He alone is noble who is devoted to God.

As the poor castor-plant acquires fragrance from the  
sandalwood tree growing near,

So do the fallen become approved of God in holy company.

He is the highest of all, pre-eminent, in whose heart is lodged  
the Lord.

Nanak, the servant of God washes the feet of such a servant  
of God,

As serves those of lower castes.

*(Raga Gaund, Guru Ramdas, p. 861)*

<sup>1</sup>Original, Par-Brahm.

<sup>2</sup>Reference is to the four stages of life for the "twice-born" in Aryan society.



*Grihu taji bankhand jaiyai chun khaiyai kanda*

Leave home and family to dwell in a forest;  
 Live on herbs and roots!  
 This sinful, polluted heart still discards not evil desires.  
 How may weak man be saved?  
 How cross over the vast ocean of worldliness?  
 Beloved Lord! in Thee I seek shelter;  
 Save me! Save me!  
 Hard it is to turn away from the aroma of sin;  
 In vain all efforts: coil on coil the mind it grips.  
 Past is youth, old age is come—  
 Yet little good have I achieved.  
 This invaluable human incarnation,  
 For a cowrie shall be thrown away.  
 Saith Kabir: Lord, All-pervasive!  
 Infinite is Thy grace,  
 As endless is my sinfulness.

(*Raga Bilaval, Kabir, p. 855-56*)

*Ik kand-mool chunin khahin vankhand wasa*

Some live on herbs and roots,  
 And take their abode in forests;  
 Others wear ochre and wander about in the way of  
 anchorites.<sup>1</sup>  
 Little it avails to make them pure,  
 As their minds hunger keenly after clothing and food.  
 All such have wasted their lives—  
 Neither are they householders nor true anchorites.

<sup>1</sup>Original, yogi, sanyasi.

Because of their involvement with the three qualities  
They escape not death.<sup>1</sup>

Death approaches not God's humble servants<sup>2</sup> who are  
endowed with the Divine wisdom.

God's holy Word purifies their minds,  
And while engaged in daily duties<sup>3</sup> they indeed are  
anchorites.

Saith Nanak: Such truly serve God and have risen above  
hope and despair.

*(Var Majh, Guru Ramdas, p. 140)*

*Na Tu awai wasi bahut ghinawane*

Not by abject solicitation may we win Thy favour;<sup>4</sup>

Nor by study of Scriptures;<sup>5</sup>

Nor by holy bathing;

Nor by wandering the world over;

Nor by subtle philosophy;<sup>6</sup>

Nor by shoals<sup>7</sup> given in charity.

Thou who art inaccessible, unknowable.

All lies in thy power;

Thy devotees alone may command Thy love—

From Thee they find exaltation.

*(Var Ramkali, Guru Arjan, p. 962)*

<sup>1</sup>Literally, death inflicted by Yama. (The transmigratory cycle is implied.)

<sup>2</sup>Literally, slaves' slaves.

<sup>3</sup>Original, in the home (i.e. engaged in the duties of a householder rather than living as an anchorite).

<sup>4</sup>Literally, capture Thee.

<sup>5</sup>Original, Veda.

<sup>6</sup>Original, wisdom.

<sup>7</sup>Literally, much, large amount.



seven      *Suffering Transmuted*

*Tati wau na lagai Par-Brahm sharnaee*<sup>1</sup>

In the Supreme Lord's protection  
Suffering shall not touch me;  
All around me is drawn the Lord's mystic circle,<sup>2</sup>  
Keeping away suffering.  
Devotion to<sup>3</sup> the perfect Master, the Creator of all has given  
me this medicine,  
Absorption in Him alone,  
The Preserver, has preserved me,  
And annulled all pain.  
Saith Nanak: By His grace  
Has the Lord come to aid me.

(*Raga Bilawal, Guru Arjan, p. 819*)

*Kahe mana tun dolta Hari mansa puranhar*

My mind! Why these pangs of anxiety?  
God is the fulfiller of all our desires.  
Contemplate the Almighty<sup>4</sup> who ends<sup>5</sup> all suffering.  
My mind! devote thyself to God's Name—  
Thereby all thy sin and evil shall vanish.

<sup>1</sup>The theme of this hymn is the annulment of the feeling of sorrow through devotion to God.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Ram-Kar, the mystical line drawn by Rama to protect Sita from harm, which however, she later overstepped.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, the sight of the Perfect Lord.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Satiguru Purakh (Purusha). Purusha is the Supreme Being. Almighty creator.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, brings about forgetfulness of, eliminates.

Those who are so destined<sup>1</sup> are touched with love for God;<sup>2</sup>  
They have discarded Maya's pleasures,  
And gathered the endless wealth of devotion.<sup>3</sup>  
Day and night are they engrossed in one pursuit,  
Submitting to the eternal Divine Ordinance.  
Nanak, Servant of God, begs this boon only;  
Grant me a sight of Thee!  
Grant me devotion to Thee!

*(Var in Raga Ramkali, Guru Arjan, p. 959)*

*Ja kau mushkal ati banai dhoi koi na deai*

One in the grip of extreme calamity,  
Without human support,  
Pursued by enemies, deserted by near and dear ones,  
All succour gone and vanished—  
Should God's exalted Name<sup>4</sup> then enter his thoughts,  
Not a whiff of hot air<sup>5</sup> would touch him.  
The Lord is strength to the feeble;  
Uncreated, eternal, ever the same—  
Learn the truth of Him from the Preceptor's holy Word.

One who is powerless, afflicted by indigence, hunger;  
Without wealth, consolation:  
Without means, resources, wherewithal—  
Should God's exalted Name then enter his thoughts,  
Unshakeable shall power<sup>6</sup> be.

<sup>1</sup>As elsewhere, 'destiny' is made by man's good actions and Divine Grace consequent on these.

<sup>2</sup>Original Nirankar (nirakar)—the Formless.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, the Name.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Par-Brahm—the Transcendent God.

<sup>5</sup>Implies suffering.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, authority.



One tormented by sorrows, afflicted in body,  
 Overwhelmed by worries of home and family,  
 Tossed between hope<sup>1</sup> and despair,<sup>2</sup>  
 Driven all over the world, without peace—  
 Should God's exalted Name then enter his thoughts,  
 Joyful<sup>3</sup> shall be in body and mind.

One subdued by lust, violence, stupor of wordliness,  
 Curmudgeonly greed of possessions,  
 Guilty of the four deadly sins,<sup>4</sup> evils,  
 In the aim of God's destroying arrow like a demon,  
 Indifferent to scriptures, holy chant, devotional song—  
 Should in such a state God's exalted Name enter his thoughts,  
 Even a moment's devotion may carry him across.<sup>5</sup>

One who may recite all the scriptures<sup>6</sup> by rote,  
 Should perform austerities, be a Yogi,  
 Wander over all holy spots,  
 Should perform the six-fold<sup>7</sup> ritual,  
 Even double that;  
 Perform worship after ritual bathing—  
 Without joy of devotion to God would he inevitably fall  
 to perdition.<sup>8</sup>

Power, wealth, exalted offices,  
 Excess of indulgence in pleasures,  
 Delectable garden-spots,

<sup>1</sup>Literally, joy.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, sorrow.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, cool.

<sup>4</sup>According to Indian tradition : Indulgence in liquor, theft of gold, seducing one's teacher's wife, killing a cow or Brahmin.

<sup>5</sup>As elsewhere in Indian thought, implies liberation; mukti.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, Shastras, Smritis, four Vedas.

<sup>7</sup>As prescribed in the Brahminical tradition.

<sup>8</sup>Literally, hell (narka).

Authority unchallenged,  
Pursuit of manifold voluptuous joys—  
Should one caught in all such meditate not on God,  
Would he be reborn a serpent.

One possessed of vast wealth,  
Living in exalted style,  
Of great fame, maintaining splendid traditions,  
Fixed in love of relations and family,<sup>1</sup>  
Lord of hosts, warriors,  
Honoured by one and all—  
Should he meditate not on God,  
Must he be dragged to the nether regions.<sup>2</sup>

One sound in strength of body, without worry, sorrow,  
Forgetful of the day of death,  
Sunk day and night in pleasures,  
Accumulating possessions,  
Without thought of scruple—  
Should he meditate not on God,  
Must he fall under power of Yama's minions.

One on whom God's grace falls seeks holy company,  
Evermore of which attaches man to God,  
The sole Lord of this life and hereafter,  
Away from whom no shelter is for man.  
Saith Nanak: God's holy Name may be found only through  
His grace.

*(Sri Raga, Guru Arjan, pp. 70-71)*

<sup>1</sup>Literally, mother, father, children, brothers.

<sup>2</sup>That is, the hell of the Indian conception.



*Mera man lochai Gurudarshan taen*

My heart yearns for a sight of the Master;  
Crying out like the chatrik,  
Who in thirst remains unconsoled—  
Unconsoled without a sight of the Beloved.  
For a sight of the Beloved, the holy,  
May I be a sacrifice!  
Lovely is Thy face,  
Soft, tender thy words;  
For long has the chatrik yearned for a sight of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Praised be the soil where Thou hast Thy abode,  
Thou noble Friend, Lord.  
Master, friend, beloved—  
May I be sacrifice to Thee!  
A moment<sup>2</sup> in separation from Thee is the Dark Age.<sup>3</sup>

Lord! When may I have a sight of Thee?  
Lord! Without a sight of thy royal Presence<sup>4</sup>  
For me each night is a sleepless torment;  
For a sight of that holy Presence may I be a sacrifice!

By good fortune have I a sight of God's holy devotee;  
The Lord Eternal have I found in my home.<sup>5</sup>  
May I serve Thee ever and ever,  
Separate from Thee not for an instant!  
This is the prayer of Nanak, Thy servant:  
Thy servant Nanak, the devoted slave prays:  
May I ever be a sacrifice to you!

(*Raga Majh, Guru Arjan, p. 96-97*)

<sup>1</sup>Original, Sarangpani (He who holds the universe in His hand).  
<sup>2</sup>Original, ghari (a period of 24 minutes). <sup>3</sup>Original, Kali-yuga. <sup>4</sup>Original, Durbar. <sup>5</sup>Stands for one's heart, wherein God abides.

*Tit sarvarre bhaile nivasa pani pavak tneh kiya*

Man's abode is in a lake filled with flames;<sup>1</sup>  
Caught in the mire of delusion, our steps move not—  
Everywhere the feet sink.  
Thou thoughtless mind, how thou hast forgotten God;  
This forgetfulness has destroyed all good in thee.  
I a sinner, am neither continent nor bountiful—  
Ignorant fool that I am.<sup>2</sup>  
The supplicant Nanak seeks shelter with those holy devotees  
Who have not neglected to serve Thee.

*(Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 357)*

*Divā mera Ek Nam dukh vich paiya tel*

Devotion to God's Name is my lamp;  
In this lamp is put the oil of suffering;  
The light of God's Name burns away<sup>3</sup> that oil,  
Annuling Yama's encounter.<sup>4</sup>  
Listen, people of the world!  
Lest any carp at this faith:  
Vast<sup>5</sup> loads of firewood are reduced to ashes<sup>6</sup> by a  
tiny spark of fire.  
Devotion to God<sup>7</sup> is my ritual charity;  
God's<sup>8</sup> holy Name my ceremonial;

<sup>1</sup>Literally, in which God has put the water of fire.

<sup>2</sup>This is an expression of deep humility and prayer for Divine grace.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, dries up.

<sup>4</sup>Implies retribution for evil.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, hundreds of thousands.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, one grain's weight (ratti).

<sup>7</sup>Original, Keshava (Vishnu).

<sup>8</sup>Original, Kartar (Creator).



In this life and the next, this alone is my sustenance.  
 Lord! Your laudation to me is holy Ganga and Benares,  
 Wherein my soul takes the holy dip.  
 True holy bathing is when devotion to God abides in the  
     heart day and night.  
 Brahmins partake of charities offered to the gods and what is  
     offered to departed ancestors.  
 Saith Nanak: The charity of God's grace is an inexhaustible  
     store.

(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 358*)

*Prabhu pas jan ki ardas tu sachā Sain*

This prayer I offer Thee:  
 Thou art the true Lord,  
 Eternal Protector—  
 On Thee I ever meditate.  
 All creation is Thine;  
 Thou pervadest it.  
 Traducers of Thy devotees  
 Thou dost annihilate.  
 Saith Nanak: At Thy feet  
 I find abiding peace that annuls all sorrow.

(*Var Gujarī, Guru Amardas, p. 517*)

*Das Tere ki benati rid kar pargasu*

This Lord, is Thy Servant's prayer:  
 Illumine my mind;  
 Send Thy grace to destroy my sins.  
 Thy lotus-feet my sole support,  
 Thou who art Lord of all merit.

May I ever meditate on Thy praise, Thy exalted Name, while  
life lasts.<sup>1</sup>

Thou my Mother, Father, Brother;

On Thee all creation rests.

Nanak seeks shelter with the Lord,

Master of immaculate praise.

(*Bilaval, Guru Arjan, p. 818*)

### TRIAL OF KABIR'S FAITH

*Bhujā bandh bhila kar dariyo*

Arms pinioned, was I thrown down in a heap:

The mahout in a rage was pricking the elephant on the head;

The elephant was rushing along shrieking:

May I be a sacrifice to this wonderful spectacle!

Lord! My strength is all Thine.

The Kazi urged the mahout to goad on the elephant,

Threatening, "Mahout! I will cut off thy head.

Strike the beast!<sup>2</sup> Race it!"

The elephant, meditating on God, budged not:

In his heart had entered the Lord—

Meditating: What offence has this holy man committed;

Why is he thrown in a heap to be trampled?<sup>3</sup>

The elephant bowed again and again to the heap before it.

This moved<sup>4</sup> not the benighted Kazi.

Thrice was the trial made;

Still his hard heart would not melt.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, while breath is in this vessel.

<sup>2</sup>Original, it, him.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, before the elephant.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, the Kazi still did not realize this.



Saith Kabir: The Lord is my preserver;  
His servant's life is in the Fourth State.<sup>1</sup>

(*Raga Gaund, Kabir, p. 870*)

*Dukh muhra maran Prabhu-nam*

Sorrow is the poison—God's Name is the substance to  
*transmute it into joy;*

This chemical substance may be pulverized on the stone of  
contentment, with the hand of charity.

One constantly taking this elixir shall not suffer pains of  
dissolution,

And in the end will spurn the terrors of Death.<sup>2</sup>

(*Raga Malhar, Guru Nanak, pp. 1256-57*)

*Kali kati raje kasae*

The age is turned knife, rulers butchers;

Righteousness has flown away on wings.

This is the dark night of evil;

The moon of righteousness is visible nowhere:

I have groped and groped to madness—

In this thick darkness no path is visible.

The whole world wails in suffering, gripped in egoism.

Says Nanak, by what means may release come?

(*Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 145*)

<sup>1</sup>That is, in God's keeping. (The fourth state is *Turiya*).

<sup>2</sup>Spiritual death is meant.

*Nanak bolan jhakhna dukh chhad mangiyai sukh*

Nanak, for man it is idle to ask for pleasure when suffering comes;

Pleasure and suffering are like robes which man must wear as they come.

Silence alone is commendable where arguing may be of no avail.

*(Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 149)*

*Dukh vichhora ik dukh bhukh*

The greatest of all sufferings is separation from God;

Another is the suffering of hunger and poverty;

Next is the suffering from the tyrant-aggressor.

These are maladies, fatal to the body.

Thou simple-minded physician, attempt not a cure!<sup>1</sup>

*(Raga Malhar, Guru Nanak, p. 1256)*

*Kaiya-hans sanjog mel milaiya*

God made the union between the body and the soul;<sup>2</sup>

He also thereby brought about separation of the soul from Himself.

The fool is absorbed in pleasures, which all result in suffering.

From pleasure rises the disease of the sin that man commits.

From pleasure rises suffering and separation from God,

That destroys man spiritually.

*(Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 139)*

<sup>1</sup>That is, these are incurable by human skill. God's grace alone may suffice.

<sup>2</sup>Literally : the swan (hans).



*Dukh darwaza roh rakhwala asa andesa doi patt jare*

Sorrow is its<sup>1</sup> gate; violence its door-keeper;  
Panels of hope and fear are fixed in it.  
A moat full of the water of illusion<sup>2</sup> surrounds it;  
This house is built on water:  
Man may find a resting place in it  
Only on the seat of purity.

(*Raga Ramkali, Guru Nanak, p. 877*)

*Bhring patang kunchar ar meena*

The bumble-bee, the moth, the elephant, the fish and the stag,—  
All are destroyed by their own actions.<sup>3</sup>  
Absorbed in desire, man sees not the essence.  
The philanderer thinks of gratifying his lust;  
All kinds of evil persons are ruined by their violence.<sup>4</sup>  
Forgetfulness of God takes away man's honour and wisdom.  
The worldly man is restless for what belongs to others—  
He has a noose round his neck, yet is engrossed in seeking  
more and more.  
Man can be emancipated only if he meditates on God  
Through His own grace.

(*Raga Gauri, Guru Nanak, p. 225-26*)

<sup>1</sup>I.e. of life.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Maya.

<sup>3</sup>I.e. by running into temptation.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, wrath.

*Mana pardesi je thiyai sabh des paraiya*

To the mind turned stranger,<sup>1</sup> the whole world is estranged.  
To whom shall I tell my sorrow?<sup>2</sup> The whole world is in the  
grip of suffering—

By suffering is the whole world gripped—

Who shall understand my state?

Terrible are the paces of transmigration, unending.

Those without God are unfulfilled, dejected—unfamiliar with  
the Word.

To the mind turned stranger, the whole world is estranged.

(*Raga Suhi, Guru Nanak, p. 760*)

#### ON SULAHİ'S AGGRESSION

##### I

The hymns given below reflect the anxiety and tension at the news of Sulahi's attack. Sulahi was a commander of the Mughal troops, and had been instigated on false complaints to lead an attack on Guru Arjan, who was then at Amritsar. The sequel expresses the Guru's faith in God and the succour of His devotees.

*Prathme mata je patri chalawau*

One counsel was to dispatch a letter;

The next, to send two messengers;<sup>3</sup>

Still another, to make some effort:

Lord, discarding all such advice I meditated on Thee alone.

The holy Master instructed me thus:

This life and body all is the Lord's;

<sup>1</sup>I.e. to God.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, open my package of pain.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, men.



All that happens is by God's decree.  
 Thou art my shelter and judge.  
 Leaving Thee, whither shall we go?  
 None else has power like Thine.<sup>1</sup>  
 Thy servant is under no one's fear;  
 The misbeliever<sup>2</sup> wanders about in the wilderness.<sup>3</sup>  
 Inexpressible is Thy might—  
 Everywhere dost Thou give protection and Thy loving clasp  
 to Thy devotees.  
 Nanak, Thy Servant, seeks shelter with Thee.  
 The Lord saved my honour,  
 And was sounded the fanfare of jubilation.

(Raga Asa, Guru Arjan, p. 371)

## II

*Narayan Sulahi te rākh*

Lord! protect us from Sulahi's tyranny!  
 Sulahi is rendered powerless to do harm;  
 He has died wrapped in impurity.<sup>4</sup>  
 The Lord, at one stroke of the axe smote his head;  
 In a moment was he reduced to ashes.  
 He was destroyed, involved in his evil designs;  
 God who created him pushed him to his death.  
 Neither progeny<sup>5</sup> nor friends nor wealth lasted with him—  
 All relations and supporters he forsook.  
 Nanak is a sacrifice to the Lord,  
 Who upheld the prophecy<sup>6</sup> of His Servant.

(Bilawal, Guru Arjan, p. 825)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, none else is like Thee.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Sakta.

<sup>3</sup>Implies wandering about in false beliefs.

<sup>4</sup>He fell into a burning brick kiln and died in its fire, forbidden to a Muslim in death. <sup>5</sup>Literally, brothers and relations. <sup>6</sup>Literally, word.

## III

*Gariban uppar je khinjai darhi*<sup>1</sup>

The beard<sup>2</sup> vowing terror on the poor  
 Is by Divine command consumed in flames.  
 Perfect is Divine justice:  
 His servants He ever protects.  
 His might is manifest from creation's hour to eternity.<sup>3</sup>  
 The evil-minded perish in great agony;  
 The tyrant is destroyed by the Hand that none overrules—  
 Destroyed in evil repute.  
 He cherishes His servants in love.  
 Meditating the Name, Nanak prays for Divine succour.  
 (*Raga Gauri, Guru Arjan, p. 199*)

*Maran na manda loka akhiyai je koi mar janai*

Listen people of the world! dying is not an evil,  
 Provided one knows how to die:  
 Blessed is the death of heroic men,<sup>4</sup>  
 Should they meet it in an approved cause.  
 (*Alahuniyan, Dirges, Guru Nanak, p. 579*)

<sup>1</sup>This hymn also has reference to Sulahi's death in flames.

<sup>2</sup>Stroking one's beard is a way of confirming a vow.

<sup>3</sup>Original, *Adi-Jugadi*.

<sup>4</sup>This, of course, is martyrdom.



*Gagandamama bajiyo pariyo nisnai ghao*

The sky-resounding kettle-drum is struck;  
 The battle is joined,<sup>1</sup>  
 The hero has taken the field:  
 Now is the time to fight.  
 The true hero is one who wages the struggle  
 For the poor and the helpless;  
 Who may be cut from limb to limb,  
 Yet flees not the field.

(*Slokas, Kabir, p. 1105*)

## NAMDEV'S TESTAMENT TO FAITH

*Sultan poochhai sun be Nama!*

Said the Sultan: 'Hear thou Nama.  
 Let me see what thy Rama will do for thee.'  
 Nama was bound by the Sultan's order,  
 Who declared arrogantly:  
 Let me see the power of Hari Vithal.<sup>2</sup>  
 Either bring to life this slaughtered cow,  
 Or else I shall cut off thy head.  
 Said Nama: "Great Kings, how may this happen?  
 What is slaughtered, cannot be made to live.  
 No power have I to effect anything;  
 All that happens is Rama's doing."  
 The King at this was in a mighty rage,  
 And set a great elephant at Nama.  
 Nama's mother lamented and cried.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, the target is being hit.

<sup>2</sup>Namdev's name for God.

She said: "Leave Rama! Why not worship Khuda?"<sup>1</sup>  
Said Nama: "For saying this, I no more am thy son,  
Nor thou my mother.  
Even though this body perish, I still will sing Hari's praises!"  
The elephant struck at Nama with its trunk;  
But Nama was saved through Divine protection.  
Said the King: "Kazis and Mullahs do me obeisance,  
But this Hindu has humbled me."  
The Hindus petitioned the Sultan: "Grant our prayer,  
Free Nama: take gold of equal weight for him."  
Replied the Monarch: "If I accept your offer, I fall into hell;  
How may I repudiate faith and follow worldliness?"  
With fetters on his feet Nama yet clapped his hands,  
Singing praises of the Lord.  
Let Ganga and Jamuna flow back to their sources,  
Nama still will not give up worship of Hari.<sup>2</sup>  
The seven hours given by the King had passed,  
Yet the Lord of the Universe had not appeared.  
Lo! There was a sound of wings beating in the air—  
Appeared the Lord mounted on Garuda.<sup>3</sup>  
He showed grace to His devotee,  
And came mounted on Garuda.  
Declared the Lord: "What is thy wish?  
Shall I turn the earth upside down;  
Or lift it and place it above the sky?  
If thou wish, I restore to life the dead cow."  
Said Nama: 'Spancel<sup>4</sup> the cow.'  
The calf was brought and the cow was milked.

<sup>1</sup>Rama is the Hindu name for God, while Khuda is the Muslim name.

<sup>2</sup>The Hindu word for God.

<sup>3</sup>The mount of Vishnu, the Lord.

<sup>4</sup>I have taken this word from Macauliffe's *sikh Religion*.



When the pot was filled with milk,  
 He brought it and placed before the King;  
 Hard was this moment for the King;  
 In perplexity he returned to the palace.  
 Kazi and Mullah came with word from the King:  
 "Hindu, forgive me, I am thy cow."<sup>1</sup>  
 Said Nama: "Listen O King!  
 I seek only thy solemn word.  
 This word of thine I shall accept—  
 Follow ever the path of truth and righteousness!"  
 All now were at one with Namdev.  
 Hindus all came in a body.  
 Said they: "Had the cow not come to life.  
 Namdev had then lost credit."  
 The world praised Nama:  
 The Lord carried His devotee across the water.<sup>2</sup>  
 Nama's traducers were unhappy, miserable.  
 Listen: Nama and the Lord are at one.

(Raga Bhairon, Namdev, pp. 1165-66)

*Ik til Piyara visrai rog wada mana manhi*

Forgetfulness of the Beloved even for a moment,  
 Is the great malady of the soul;  
 How may one find honour at the Portal without the  
 Beloved lodged in the heart?  
 Through union with God comes joy and assuaging the fire  
 of suffering.

(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 21)

<sup>1</sup>Figuratively an expression of humility.

<sup>2</sup>That is, saved his soul.

*Koti-koti meri araja pawan piyan apiyao*

Were I to live years millions upon millions;  
Did I in my austerities live alone on air and water;  
Were I in severe penance of seclusion never to see sun or  
moon;  
Were sleep to visit me not in thought even:  
Even thus would Thy greatness still elude my mind.  
What measure might I give of Thy Name?  
Eternal, Formless,  
Immutable the Lord.  
I utter what my poor understanding may grasp;  
Thus alone through Thy grace may I reveal Thy greatness.

Were I in my austerities beaten like the kusa<sup>1</sup> grass,  
Ground down like grain, burnt in fire to mingle in the  
ash-heap—  
Even thus would Thy greatness still elude me.  
What measure might I give of Thy Name?

Were I to hover on bird's wings and sweep the expanse of  
the firmament;  
Were my powers to make me invisible to the eye;  
Were I in my penance to live without food or drink;  
Even thus would Thy greatness still elude me.  
What measure might I give of Thy Name?

<sup>1</sup>A grass beaten to shape it into various useful objects.



Saith Nanak: a million weights of paper, written over with  
learning and devotion,  
With ink in unending stream, with the motion of wind to  
scribe—

Even thus might Thy greatness be not expressed!

What measure might I give of Thy Name?

(*Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 14*)

# FROM SRI RAGA: GURU NANAK'S ECSTASY AND MEDITATIONS

## I

*Moti ta mandir usrai ratni ta hoi jaraoo*

Palaces built all of pearl,  
With gems studded;  
Plastered with musk, saffron, aloe and sandalwood,  
Fragrant to fill the heart with joy—  
Man, lest such spectacles beguile thee to forget God,  
To put Him<sup>1</sup> out of thy mind!  
May I be consumed in flames should I live without the Lord!  
My Master have I consulted—  
For man in God alone is true refuge.

On floors<sup>2</sup> with gems and rubies strewn all around;  
With luxurious beds studded all with rubies;  
In dalliance with ravishing<sup>3</sup> beauties,  
With faces sparkling as gems—  
Man, lest such spectacles beguile thee to forget God,  
To put Him out of thy mind.

<sup>1</sup>The original is in the second person: "Lest man should put out of mind Thy Name." <sup>2</sup>Literally, earth. <sup>3</sup>Literally, beauties exciting the pleasures of love.

Should I attain perfection in yogic faculties,  
Invoking miraculous powers;  
Should I vanish and manifest myself at will,  
Inspire mankind to my veneration and worship—  
Thou foolish heart, lest these wonders  
Beguile thee to forget God,  
To put Him out of thy mind.

Should one attain royal majesty,  
Be master of hosts and lord of thrones;<sup>1</sup>  
Should his<sup>2</sup> writ run over the earth—  
Nanak, all this is void, of little worth.  
Man, lest such vanity beguile thee to forget God,  
To put him out of thy mind.

*(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 14)*

## II

*Rāsa suina rasa ruppa kāmīni rasa parmāl ki vās*

Pleasure lies in gold, silver, woman, and delectable<sup>3</sup>  
objects;  
Pleasure lies in mounts, soft beds, mansions and attractions  
of the palate.<sup>4</sup>  
With all such pleasures, how may the Name find place in  
the mind?

*(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 25)*

<sup>1</sup>Literally, should set foot on a throne.

<sup>2</sup>In the original, first person: "Should I attain..., Should my writ run" etc.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, fragrant.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, sweet things and animal food.



*Bhinni rainaryai chamkan tare*

In the cool<sup>1</sup> midnight hour the stars shine:  
 Devotees loved of God alone are now awake.  
 God's loved ones are ever awake, meditating on Him  
 endlessly,  
 Their minds absorbed in contemplation of God's lotus feet,  
 Forgetting Him not for an instant.  
 Give up pride, delusion, evils of heart,  
 Burn in flames these dark evils.  
 Saith Nanak in humble prayer:  
 Ever awake are devotees of God, beloved of Him.  
 (Raga Asa, Guru Arjan, p. 459)

*Jiun machhli bin paniai kiun jiwan pawai*

As the fish lives not out of water;  
 As the chatrik finds not rest without the drop of rain it  
 yearns for;  
 As the deer captivated by the sound of the drum rushes  
 towards it;  
 As the humming-bee seeking the flower's trapped fragrance  
 gets trapped—  
 Even such in the devotees is love for God:  
 In His sight alone they find fulfilment.  
 (Var Jaitsari, Guru Arjan, p. 708)

*Hari amrit bhinne loina mana prem ratanna Ram-Raje.*

In devotion are my eyes drenched in amrita,  
 My heart dyed in love.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, drenched.

My heart tested on God's stone is purest gold.  
Through divine grace am I dyed in God's red dye,  
My heart and body in it drenched.  
Nanak, Servant of God is wrapt<sup>1</sup> in fragrance of musk—  
My whole life a triumph, a jubilation.  
Lord God!<sup>2</sup>

Thy words of Divine love have shot at my heart  
With their barbed arrows:  
He alone knows love's torment who has endured it.  
Such a one is truly liberated,<sup>3</sup>  
Living with his ego dead.  
Lord! grant union to Nanak, Thy servant;  
Carry him across the impassable ocean of worldliness.

*(Raga Asa, Guru Ramdas, p. 448-49. Abridged)*

*Jau Tu girivar tau ham mora*

Thou art the mountain, I the peacock dancing on it;  
Thou the moon; I the chakor absorbed in its beauty.  
Lord, be ever near me:<sup>4</sup>  
Ever shall I be Thine.  
Should I break off from Thee,  
To whom may I attach myself?  
Thou the lamp; I the wick burning in it;  
Thou the holy bathing-spot, I Thy pilgrim.  
With Thee am I in abiding<sup>5</sup> love;  
In love for Thee have I broken off from all else.  
Thee I serve wherever I be.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, rinsed.

<sup>2</sup>Original, Ram-Raje.

<sup>3</sup>Original, jivan—mukta.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, break off not Thy love to me.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, true (eternal) love.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, wherever I go.



Lord! no other Master is like to Thee.  
 Chanting Thy praises snaps Yama's noose:  
 To win Thy love doth Ravidas chant hymns of devotion.  
 (*Raga Sorath, Ravidas, p. 658*)

# THE DIVINE BRIDE—SONG OF MYSTICAL AWAKENING

## I

*Main mana chao ghana sach vigasi Rama*

My heart is joy-filled, blossoming with love;  
 Ravished am I by His love—  
 Love of my eternal Lord.  
 He is the immortal Lord Supreme,  
 Whose will nothing restrains;  
 Gracious, compassionate,  
 In each one's life involved.  
 He my sole knowledge, object of meditation, adoration,  
 His name in my soul lodged:  
 Neither vesture nor wandering ritual nor austerity<sup>1</sup>  
 Know I to win Him over:  
 Nanak, true devotion alone conquers His love.

## II

*Bhinnari rain bhali dinas suhai Rama*

Agreeable is cool night, followed by happy day;  
 Thou who art asleep in thy own ego, the Beloved calls thee.<sup>2</sup>  
 Awakened is the youthful bride to the Lover's call,  
 In aspect pleasing to Him.  
 Thou youthful bride! discard falsehood, deceit,  
 Maya-absorption,<sup>3</sup> concern with the world.

<sup>1</sup>Original, Hatha.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, awakens thee from sleep.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, inclination towards Duality.

Round my neck I wear the pearl-string of His Name,  
The jewel string<sup>1</sup> of His holy Word.  
With hands folded Nanak makes supplication:  
Show Thy grace, take me into Thy favour!

III

*Jag sulonariai bolei Gurbani Rama*

Wake up; thou of lovely eyes!  
The Lord's Word makes call.  
All who anchor faith in it, inexpressible is their state.<sup>2</sup>  
Inexpressible indeed their state,  
In perfect poise<sup>3</sup> they abide.  
In the rare, select company of devotees<sup>4</sup>  
Absorbed in the Word, they shed their ego,  
Illumined by knowledge of the three worlds.<sup>5</sup>  
Their purified mind unattached to the world,  
Dyed in the Transcendent,  
Abides in enjoyment of the Essence.  
In their hearts abides the Lord  
Who fills the universe entire.

IV

*Mahal bulairiai bhagat-sanehi Rama*

Thou art ushered into the chamber by thy devoted Lover:  
Thy soul, God-instructed, alone will last:  
This body must vanish.

<sup>1</sup>Refers to the jewel worn as the bridal mark.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, their story.

<sup>3</sup>Original, pada-nirbani (the state of nirvana).

<sup>4</sup>Original, Gurmukh (See Glossary).

<sup>5</sup>Implies the esoteric mystery of the universe.



One who subdues the ego and is absorbed in the Word,  
 Will know the Lord of the Universe.  
 With mind unswerving in devotion, know thy Bridegroom.  
 Thou alone art my support, my Spouse.  
 On Thee alone I lean for strength.  
 Nanak, He is true and pure eternally—  
 God's Word settles at rest all controversy.

(*Raga Bilaval, Guru Nanak, pp. 843-844*)

*Bhali suhawi chhapri ja mehn guna gae*

Blessed is the straw hut where God's praises are chanted;  
 Worthless the white mansions where remembrance of God  
 is not.

Poverty with the holy while contemplating God,  
 Is bliss itself.

Burn that pride of high state  
 That involves the self with Maya.

In devotion to God  
 While grinding at the mill,  
 Wearing rough wool,  
 The mind is full of joy and content.

What worth kingship  
 Without peace of soul?

One wandering naked in love of God  
 Will greatly be reputed:  
 Worthless are silken robes

That to themselves absorb and attach the mind.

Lord! everything is in Your hand;  
 Nothing happens except as You will.

Nanak only begs for this boon:

May I keep meditating on You with each breath.

(*Raga Suhi, Guru Arjan, p. 745*)

*Main andhule ki tek Tera Nam Khundkara*

Lord! Devotion to Thee is support to me, blind of sight;<sup>1</sup>  
To me—poor, destitute—Thy name the sustenance.  
Thou compassionate, merciful art Allah the Bountiful;<sup>2</sup>  
A pervading Presence, ever by me art Thou.<sup>3</sup>  
Thou the Ocean of Grace, bountiful, rich beyond measure;  
Thou alone the Provider, none other.  
What worth my thinking?  
Thou art all-knowing, all-seeing.  
Thou, Nama's Master! art the gracious Lord!

(*Raga Talang, Namdev, p. 727*)

*Jhim-jhim-jhim-jhim varasi amritdhara Rama!*

In gentle showers is raining amrita—  
As by Divine grace is visioned the beloved Lord.  
Beloved is the Lord's Name, liberator of the world,  
Fount of all honour.  
In Kaliyuga God's Name is the boat,  
Carrying the devotee across by Divine grace.  
Through devotion comes joy in this life and the next:  
Devotion<sup>4</sup> of all deeds is the purest.  
Saith Nanak: This blessing comes by His Grace—  
Through devotion comes liberation.<sup>5</sup>

(*Raga Asa, Guru Ramdas, p. 442-443*)

<sup>1</sup>The spiritually unawakened state is implied.

<sup>2</sup>In this line besides Allah, epithets drawn from the Koran (*Karim Rahim, Ghani*) have been used.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, before me.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, turning Godwards.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, swimming across the ocean of worldliness.



## ON CONTENTMENT, CONTINENCE

*Nanak guru santokh rukh, dharam phull, phal gian*

Nanak, contentment the true teacher is the tree;  
 Its flower is righteousness; its fruit enlightenment.  
 This fruit is ever juicy and fresh;  
 Through good actions and meditation it ripens.  
 The eating thereof brings true joy and honour.  
 This is the greatest of charities.

(*Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 147*)

*Jati-sati chawal daya kanak kar*<sup>1</sup>

Continence and purity my rice; mercy my wheat;  
 Attainment to God my leaf-plate and offering;  
 Good actions my milk; contentment my ghee—  
 Such is the gift I seek.  
 I seek in gift the milch-cow of forgiveness and forbearance;  
 Of this cow let my mind fixed in God, suck milk.  
 The vesture I beg is God's praise and a life of noble striving.  
 May Nanak ever meditate on God's qualities!

(*Raga Prabhati, Guru Nanak, p. 1329*)

*Eh tan Maya pahiya piyare leetra labb rangai*

Beloved mine, this body is soaked in Maya,  
 The dye of greed is on it;

<sup>1</sup>The imagery in this prayer is taken from the ritual charity offered to Brahmins by orthodox Hindus.

This vesture pleases not my Spouse—how may I enter His couch?

May I be a sacrifice, a sacrifice again and again

To those who meditate on Thee—

To them may I be a sacrifice!

The best of all dyes is the fast dye of God:

Such a glowing dye<sup>1</sup> one never has seen.

The Spouse is with those whose gowns are dyed glowing:

Nanak seeks the very dust of the feet of such:

Himself the Creator and Dyer;

His the glance of grace:

Saith Nanak: On the Bride<sup>2</sup> beloved of Him,

Himself He bestows His favour.

*(Raga Talang, Guru Nanak, p. 721)*

*Nadian hovan dhevanan summ hovan dudh gheeu*

Were the rivers of the earth to become kine and springs to run milk and butter;

The entire earth to be sweet sugar and the mind with pleasure to be saturated;

The mountains to turn to gold and silver, studded with diamond and ruby:

May I forget never to bend in adoration to Thee, in joy inexpressible.

Were all vegetation to turn to fruits delectable, melting against the palate;

Were my station to be immutable, with sun and moon peregrinating around me:

<sup>1</sup>Literally, the colour of the herb majeeth.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, woman, beloved.



May I forget never to bend in adoration to Thee,  
In joy inexpressible.

Were my frame to be afflicted with excruciating suffering;  
Were evils to haunt me about, like Ketu, Rahu;<sup>1</sup>  
With blood-thirsty tyrants to rule in triumph—  
Were this to be my destiny:  
May I still bend in adoration of Thee, in joy inexpressible.

Were fire and cold to be my vesture; air my food;<sup>2</sup>  
Damsels of paradise for dalliance—all, all Nanak! is void  
and vain.  
May I forget never to bend in adoration to Thee, in joy  
inexpressible.

(*Var Majh, Guru Nanak, pp. 141-142*)

### THE GOD-FULFILLED DEVOTEE

*Rookhin birkheen udon bhukha peevan Nam subhaee*

I fly among trees and plants, hungry and insatiate;  
Water of the Name alone fills me.  
My eyes petrified, my tongue is wailing;  
His sight alone extinguishes my thirst.  
Decking myself without the Spouse is burning torment;  
My vesture irks my limbs.  
Without the Beloved life leaves my body;  
Without Him my eyes close not in sleep.  
The poor Bride knows not how close is the Spouse!  
The true Preceptor has granted a sight of Him.

<sup>1</sup>Demons, supposed to grip sun and moon, thus eclipsing them.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. were my powers to touch the pinnacle of transcendence of human frailty.

Awakening of soul has brought Him near;  
Joy is attained; the thirst is quenched through the Word.  
Saith Nanak, the heart is at peace in Thee—  
Inexpressible is Thy greatness.

(*Raga Malhar, Guru Nanak, p. 1274*)

*Sacha Sauda virla ko paye*

Rare is the man who enters into holy commerce with God;  
Only the perfect Master may bring about the seeker's union  
with Him.

The God-inspired man alone understand the Ordinance<sup>1</sup> and  
is merged with Him.

Through Ordinance is man born and he dies.

The whole visible creation is in consequence of the Ordinance.

Through the Ordinance are created the three worlds,

And through the Ordinance does God assume His power.

Through the Ordinance is the Bull<sup>2</sup> bearing the earth on his  
head.

Through the Ordinance are created air, water and the heavens.

Through the Ordinance is Shiva lodged in the house of  
Shakti,<sup>3</sup>

And so the universal play appeared.

Through the Ordinance are the heavens spread;

And all creatures of water, land, and air created.

Through the Ordinance does one get breath and food;

Through the Ordinance is man given sight.<sup>4</sup>

He who submits to the Ordinance, finds the Portal,

And is merged into the Eternal.

<sup>1</sup>The Divine Ordinance, Hukam, is meant.

<sup>2</sup>The mythical support of the earth.

<sup>3</sup>Shiva, the Eternal Principle; Shakti, matter.

<sup>4</sup>Spiritual illumination, vision.



The Ordinance kept the thirty-six ages in the void.  
Through the Ordinance are mystics and saints engaged in  
meditation.

He the Master who holds the leading-strings of the Universe  
Is the Lord of Forgiveness and Deliverance.

(Extract from *Maru Solahe*, Guru Nanak, pp. 1036-37)

*Hari bin kiv jeevan meri mai*

How may I live Mother,<sup>1</sup> without the Lord?

Glory to Thee, Lord of Universe!

To praise Thee I seek;

Never without the Lord may I live.

The Bride<sup>2</sup> is athirst for the Lord;

All night is she awake lying in wait for Him.

The Lord has captured my heart;

He alone knows my agony:

Without the Lord the soul is in travail and pain—

Seeking His Word and the touch of His feet.

Show Thy grace Lord, immerse me in Thyself.

(*Raga Sarang*, Guru Nanak, p. 1232)

*Guru-bachni mana sahaj dhiyanai*

Through the Master's precept is my mind absorbed in  
meditation;

In faith and obedience is it dyed in joy in God.

The egoists are straying in doubts, maddened.

<sup>1</sup>The Mother addressed herein implies that the speaker is the soul, personalized as the tender female in accordance with the romantic Bhakti convention.

<sup>2</sup>Refers to the soul, as the love-sick female.

How may one live without God?  
Through the Preceptor's Word is He known.  
How may I live without sight of Him, Mother?  
The heart finds not peace for one moment without the Lord,  
So speaks the Master's Word.  
In separation from the Lord am I as one dead in anguish.  
With each breath and morsel may I meditate on the Lord  
and seek Him!

Me the long-separated, the Lord has blessed with the Name;  
Now know I by grace the Lord to be ever by my side.

(*Raga Bilawal, Guru Nanak, p. 976*)

#### THE LOVE-DREAM

*Morin run-jhun laiya bhaine Savan aiya*

Sister,<sup>1</sup> Savan<sup>2</sup> has come;  
The peacocks' enchanting notes are heard.  
Thy stabbing looks, Lord, have captivated my passionate  
heart:  
For a sight of Thee, would I cut myself to pieces,  
Sacrifice myself to Thy Name.  
What pride is in me where Thou art—what pride is mine?  
Foolish female, smash thy bangles against thy couch,  
Against the poles of thy couch—  
With all thy make-up thy Lord favours others.  
What worth the bangle-seller, what worth the bangles?  
May these arms burn that embrace not the Lord.  
All my friends have gone to find love with their spouses;  
At what door may I the miserable, find shelter?

<sup>1</sup>In the tradition of Bhakti, the seeker-soul is personalized as the female.

<sup>2</sup>The romantic month of rains, July-August.



Friend mine, so well-mannered am I; yet find I not favour  
with the Lord.

To see me weep the whole world has wept—wept even the  
birds of the forest—

He in whose separation I wept is still untouched.

He came to me in dream; with tears were my eyes filled.

Beloved, neither can I come to Thee, nor send to Thee  
messenger—

Come thou blessed sleep, maybe I have His sight in sleep.

Nanak, thou speakest of the Lord—what hast thou to offer  
Him?

To offer Him my severed head for a seat;

Without this head to serve Him.

How may one not die; not immolate oneself,

With the Lord turned stranger?

*(Raga Wadhans, Guru Nanak, p. 537-58)*

*Harni hovan ban basan kand-mool chun khaun*

May I be a sacrifice time and again to the Lord,<sup>1</sup>

Were I through grace to find Him.

To find Him would I be a Doe living in the forest,

Browsing among herbs and roots.

God is my merchandise!

Thy Name my capital and substance.

To find in gesture spontaneous the Lord,

To have sight of His beauty infinite,

Would I be a Kokila on the mango,

Voicing Him forth in notes unforced.

To meet the Lord would I be a Fish,

<sup>1</sup>Order of opening lines transposed.

Living ever in Him—  
The sustaining water pervasive;  
So may I hold Him in embrace now and ever.  
To meet the Lord would I be a She-serpent,  
Living in earth's bowels, my fear consumed in joy of  
intoxicating notes.  
Nanak, never is she widowed whose light is merged in the  
Light infinite.

(*Raga Gauri Bairagan, Guru Nanak, p. 157*)

### THE DIVINE BRIDEGROOM<sup>1</sup>

*Tere banke loin dant risala*

Lovely Thy eyes, and sweet pearly teeth;  
Beautiful profile<sup>2</sup> and long Thy tresses;  
Thy limbs moulded all in gold—  
Moulded all in gold:  
Tell, my maiden-friends, beads of devotion to Him—  
So may ye escape the door of the god of death—listen to this  
my advice.  
Pure shall your souls be—storks shall turn into swans.  
Lovely the eyes and sweet pearly teeth.  
Elegant Thy gait; beautiful, sweet Thy words.  
Liquid Thy youth; sweet Thy accents as Kokila chirping.  
Measured thy gait like elephant<sup>3</sup> self-bedecked.  
Liquid thy youth, self-intoxicated with fulfilled desires;  
The Bride, intoxicated with love of the Divine Lord,<sup>4</sup>  
Steps about like Ganga-waves.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For a parallel, *the Song of Songs* in the Old Testament may be studied. That also is oriental poetry of spiritualized love. <sup>2</sup>Original, Nose. <sup>3</sup>A classical Indian simile. <sup>4</sup>Original, Sri-Rang (Vishnu). <sup>5</sup>The elephant and Ganga waves have characteristic Indian associations.



Submits Nanak, God's Slave: Elegant is Thy gait and sweet  
Thy accents.

(*Raga Wardhans, Guru Nanak, p. 567*)

## PANGS OF SEPARATION

### I

*Sun nah piyare ik benanti meri*

Hear, Lord-spouse, my supplication!  
Thou art in Thy own abode; in separation am I consumed to  
a heap of ashes.

None except one's own gives love—helpless is my state.  
I yearn to sip the amrita of Thy Name;  
With Thy Word, to make my palate sweet!  
Besides Thee no friend have I among numerous beings of the  
world.

Nanak, I long to return to the Abode,  
With the profit of Truth made with wisdom given by Thee.  
(*Raga Tukhari, Guru Nanak, p. 1111*)

### II

*Sajan des videsiare sanchure dendi*

Beloved gone to strange lands, I send messages after Thee:  
Look after Thy Bride, her eyes flowing with tears—  
Flowing with tears her eyes, contemplating Thy virtues,  
questing after Thee:  
Unknown and hard the way—how may I cross over to Him?  
To one separated, union with the Lord may come through  
purity;  
Through surrender of body and soul!

Nanak, the sapling of amrita, of joy supreme hath put on fruit:

In union with the Beloved may its joy be tasted!

(*Raga Tukhari, Guru Nanak, p. 1111*)

### III

*Sun Nah-Prabhujio ekalri ban mahen*

Listen Lord-Spouse, this soul is lonely in the wilderness!

Beloved mine, indifferent to me, how may I find peace  
without Thee?

Caught in anguish is the Bride without the Spouse;

Terrible and dark are the nights.

Listen to my supplication:

Sleep comes not to me; ever yearn I for the Spouse.

None consoles me in separation from Him;

In loneliness I cry.

Nanak, the Bride prays for union;

Separation of the Beloved is torment unbearable.

(*Raga Gauri Chhant, Guru Nanak, p. 243*)



nine      *The City Joyful*

*Koi an milavai mera Pritam piyara haun tis peh ap vechaen*

Be I sold a slave to one who unites me with the cherished  
Beloved—

Be I a slave to have a sight of the Lord!

By the Lord's grace alone may I find<sup>1</sup> Him,

And meditate on His Name—

In joy may I meditate on Him,

And cherish Him in my mind in suffering.

In hunger His love may fill me,

By it in sorrow may I find bliss.

My flesh would I hack limb by limb

To offer in sacrifice to Him;

Immolate it<sup>2</sup> in fire.

May I be a menial slave of the Lord,

Waving the fan over Him,

Drawing water,

Living on whatever He may offer me.

The humble Nanak has fallen at Thy Portal,

Through grace unite Him to Thyself.

May I pluck out my eyes,

Cast them under His feet all the earth over,

Scouring over the whole earth wherever His feet may touch.

Should He call me to Himself, ever must I meditate on Him;

Should He repudiate me, still must I cherish Him.

Should the world praise Thy servant,

<sup>1</sup>Literally, bring about union.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, my body or limbs.

All praise is Thine;  
Should it revile him, still must he cling to the Lord.

In blowing storm and rain  
Still must I go out to have a sight of Him.  
Across the vast salt sea must the devotee go to find the Master.  
As the body gasps to death without water,  
So does the devotee die without the Master.  
As blooms the earth after rain,  
So blooms the devotee through the Master's touch.<sup>1</sup>  
A slave of His slaves am I,  
On Him calling in extreme humility.  
Prayeth Nanak to the Lord:  
In union with the Master alone find I joy.

*(Raga Suhi, Guru Ramdas, p. 757-758)*

*Ghar-mandir khushi Nam ki nadar Teri parivar*

In Thy Name to me lies the joy of living in palaces;  
Thy grace my only family.  
Thy will is my law;  
All else to me is of little worth.  
Nanak, boundless is the eternal King's bounty.  
Friend, to seek all other abodes is misery—  
In all such ways of life, come pain and evil thoughts.<sup>2</sup>  
*(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 16-17)*

<sup>1</sup>Literally, through union with the Master.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, comes pain to the body and evil thoughts to the mind.



*Jinnhin Nam vasariya se kit aye sansar*

Those who have turned away from God, meaningless is their life:

Neither in life nor hereafter is for them joy;

Like carts laden with ashes are they.

Separated from God they remain without hope of union;

At the door of Yama<sup>1</sup> great torments they undergo;

Indulgence in voluptuous music and love of pleasure is vain;

Such pleasures rack the body with maladies;

He who loves truth and utters truth ever,

His separation's<sup>2</sup> torment will end.

Nanak, forget not God—

For the rest, leave all to His will.

(*Raga Maru, Guru Nanak, p. 1010*)

#### THE BARDS OF GOD

*Sas mas sabh jio tumhara*

My life and body, my whole soul is Thine;

Thee I love with passionate love;

Eternal Provider,<sup>3</sup> thus saith Nanak the bard.<sup>4</sup>

(*Raga Dhanasari, Guru Nanak, p. 660*)

*Haun dhadi vekar karai laiya*

Me, an idle minstrel hast Thou given a task to perform :

<sup>1</sup>God of Death and Retribution.

<sup>2</sup>Separation from God.

<sup>3</sup>Original, Parvardgar (Persian).

<sup>4</sup>Original, *Shair* (Arabic for poet).

By Ordinance Primal was I assigned to chant Thy praises  
night and day.

The Lord summoned the minstrel to His eternal Mansion.  
The minstrel chanted lays of His glory and was honoured  
with a robe.<sup>1</sup>

The Eternal Name immortalizing was his meat and drink.  
By Divine prompting was he filled with it, and felt blessed.  
The minstrel chanted the True Word in ecstasy infinite.  
Nanak! through His praise is joy in the Lord Immaculate  
attained.

*(Var Majh, Guru Nanak, p. 150)*

*Haun dhadi Dar guna gawanda je Hari Prabhu bhavai*

To please the Lord I a minstrel, sing His praises at His  
Portal:

I praise the Lord who is Eternal, Immutable—  
Mortal all else.

For charity, I seek what annuls all desire and want.

Sang I: Lord! grant a sight of Thee to the minstrel,  
To relieve him of all hunger.

The Lord listened to the minstrel's prayer and summoned  
him inside the Mansion:

On beholding the Lord the minstrel was relieved of all sorrow  
and desire;

Forgot even to seek a boon;

At the touch of the Lord's feet all his desires were fulfilled:

A minstrel of little merit am I—

Blessed yet by the Lord Immaculate.

*(Raga Maru, Guru Arjan, p. 1097)*

<sup>1</sup>To be interpreted spiritually.



*Akhan jiwan visrai mar jaun*

I live only as I utter God's holy Name;  
 Forgetfulness of Him is to me death.  
 Hard it is to devote<sup>1</sup> oneself to His Name.  
 Hunger for the holy Name  
 Consumes all suffering.  
 Mother mine, why may man forget  
 The holy Master and His holy Name?  
 Even a particle of the holy Name's greatness would elude<sup>2</sup>  
 man;  
 Nowise would he know it.<sup>3</sup>  
 To God man's laudation is of no value—  
 His laudation by the entire universe  
 Will neither add to His greatness nor diminish it.  
 Death touches Him not; nor is He sorrowed over:  
 For ever and ever He bestows gifts from His undiminished  
 store.  
 Such the uniqueness of His greatness.  
 Without a rival or equal He eternally abides.  
 Thy bounty Lord, is great as Thyself,  
 Thou who hast arranged day and night in endless order.<sup>4</sup>  
 The truly low-caste are those forgetful of God.  
 Saith Nanak: Those without the Name<sup>5</sup> should be reckoned  
 out castes.<sup>6</sup>

(*Raga Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 10*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, to repeat the Name.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, men are exhausted while uttering.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, discover not its value.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, he who made the night after day.

<sup>5</sup>In the idiom of the sacred poetry of Guru Nanak's tradition, this implies the state of godlessness or lack of devotion.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, low caste persons.

*Par parosan poochhile Nama ka peh chhann chhawaee ho!*

Asked me the woman next door:  
Nama! how hast thou made this thatch?  
I shall pay double—tell me where the Carpenter is that did it.  
Lady, thou canst not recompense that Carpenter:  
Look, that Carpenter is everywhere;  
The Carpenter is the sustenance of our life!  
Whose wishes his thatch made must pay this Carpenter with  
Love.

This Carpenter will come of Himself,  
When one breaks ties with the world and with family.  
I have not power to describe this Carpenter,  
Who pervades all places.  
He who knows this Carpenter is like one dumb,  
Who has tasted of the joy of amrita—  
How may such a one describe him?  
Listen, lady! This is the Carpenter who has fixed the ocean,  
And made the pole-star.  
Nama's Lord has Sita for wife and has honoured Bibhikhan.<sup>1</sup>  
(*Raga Sorath, Namdev, p. 657*)

*Main bawri mera Ram bhatar*

I am crazed by love;  
The Lord is my Spouse;  
For Him I deck myself in all joy.  
Folks! Traduce me as much as ye may—  
My body and soul is all for the Beloved!  
(*Raga Bhairon, Namdev, p. 1164. Abridged*)

<sup>1</sup>Ravana's good brother, rewarded by Rama, according to the *Ramayana* story.



*Marwar jaise neer bahla bel bahla karhala*

Dear to me is the Lord, as water to dry Marwar;<sup>1</sup>  
 As creeper to the hungry camel; the night-cry to the deer.  
 Lovely is Thy Name, Lord! lovely Thy form, Thy features.  
 Dear to me is the Lord, as the rain-cloud to the earth;  
 Fragrance of the flower to the humming-bee; mango to the  
 kokila;  
 As the sun to the chakwi and Mansarovar<sup>2</sup> to the swan;  
 As the spouse to the young wife;  
 As milk to the babe; as the drop to the chatrik;  
 As water to the fish.

(*Raga Dhanasari, Namdev, p. 693. Abridged*)

*Nad bhramai jaise mirgai*

As the deer, captivated by the sound of the bell,  
 Loses life but takes not his mind off it—  
 Even thus look I for the Lord,  
 And fix not my mind on anything but Him.  
 As intently as the goldsmith watches gold;  
 As zealously as the philanderer  
 Gazes at the woman he desires;  
 As intently as the gambler watches the throw—  
 Even thus seek I the Lord.  
 Him I see wherever I look;  
 Nama ever worships His holy feet.

(*Raga Gaund, Namdev, p. 873*)

<sup>1</sup>An arid area in Rajasthan.

<sup>2</sup>The lake in the Himalayas, of legendary fame for its purity and as the haunt of swans.

*Apne Sevak ki apai rakhai apna Nam japavai*

He keeps *untarnished* the honour of His servant,  
And inspires him to meditate on the Name;  
He comes rushing to accomplish  
Wherever are His servant's concerns;  
He ever is at hand to help and succour him.  
Whatever the boon<sup>1</sup> the servant begs of Him,  
He grants it that instant.  
May I be a sacrifice to the servant who has earned  
Such love of the Master!  
The praise of such a servant blesses the heart;  
Nanak covets even his touch.<sup>2</sup>

(*Raga Asa, Guru Arjan, p. 403*)

*Ham maile tum ujal karte ham nirguna tum Data*

We are the polluted, you the purifier;  
Our worthlessness your grace exalts.  
We are purblind in our ignorance, you the all-knowing<sup>3</sup>  
Lord Almighty. Such, Lord, are we in our unworthiness,  
Such are you in your exalted glory.  
To us sinners are you the Saviour—  
You mighty Lord of the universe.  
You are of all things Creator and Sustainer,  
Bestower of soul, life<sup>4</sup> and breath.

<sup>1</sup>The 'boon' referred to here is not worldly riches or power, but the boon of devotion to God.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, would come over to get a touch of him. (Implies the touch of his feet).

<sup>3</sup>Literally, skilled in all faculties.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, body.



Without worth are we, unworthy utterly:  
 Show your grace, gracious one !  
 To your benefactions have we turned ungrateful—  
 Your benefactions without end.  
 Bestower of bliss, master of all destiny,  
 Shower grace on us ignorant children.  
 You the Lord of the illimitable treasure,  
 Eternal Master<sup>1</sup>

All creatures beggars at your door!  
 Saith Nanak : at your mercy I throw myself;  
 Save me at the intercession of your devotees!

(Raga Sorath, Guru Arjan, p. 613)

*Aisi Lal ! Tujh bin kaun karai*<sup>2</sup>

Beloved mine, who else may accomplish what Thou hast done?

My Master, Cherisher of the humble,  
 With the umbrella of greatness exalts such as I.  
 Thy love has embraced one whose touch the world defiles.<sup>3</sup>  
 My Master exalts the lowly  
 Without fear or apprehension.<sup>4</sup>  
 Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Sadhna, Sain—all have been saved.<sup>5</sup>  
 Saith Ravidas: Listen my devotee friends!  
 Nothing is above God's might.<sup>6</sup>

(Raga Maru, Ravidas, p. 1106)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, king.

<sup>2</sup>This hymn expresses the spiritual exaltation of Ravidas who was of the Sudra Cobbler caste.

<sup>3</sup>Implies the acceptance of his sainthood despite his low-caste origin.

<sup>4</sup>The fear is of the Brahminical caste code, which has ruled Indian social and religious thought for millennia.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, have been saved from drowning in the ocean of sin. Of the saints mentioned in this line, all except Trilochan were low-caste.

<sup>6</sup>Literally, all is within God's power.

*Mithbolara ji Hari sajjan swami mora*

Sweet-spoken is my beloved Lord!  
Never a harsh word can I recall of His utterance,  
Never a harsh utterance escapes that perfect Lord;  
Never has He cavilled at my faults.  
His way is to ennoble the fallen—  
Never knows He to break a heart.<sup>1</sup>  
Dwelling in each heart,  
In all abiding,  
He is the nearest of the near.  
Nanak, His slave, is ever seeking shelter with Him,  
The Beloved dear as ambrosia.

(*Raga Suhi, Guru Arjan, p. 784*)

*Tum chandan ham irand bapure sangi tumhare basa*

You the fragrant sandalwood;  
We the poor castor-bush  
Growing beside you!  
In Your company, ever enriched by Your fragrance  
Have I grown from a lowly bush to a prized tree.  
Lord! I seek your exalted company, your grace!<sup>2</sup>  
Full of sins am I;  
You the embodiment of grace.  
You, silk of pale-white hue;  
I the lowly worm.  
I seek holy company as the bee honey.  
Lowly my caste, my tribe, my birth.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Literally, never breaks a heart even to the extent of a sesame grain.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, protection.

<sup>3</sup>This saint came of the lowly Cobbler caste, reckoned to fall among Sudras.



Saith Ravidas the Cobbler:

My life is wasted without serving the Lord God.<sup>1</sup>

(Raga Asa, Ravidas, p. 486)

*Ram-Nam mana hedhiya awar ki kari vichar*

Pierced is the heart by devotion to God's Name—

Why contemplate any other?

True joy lies in attuning the mind to God's Word;

In dyeing the self with God lies the purest bliss.

Lord! keep me as is Thy will—

God's Name is my sole support.

My heart! God's will is holy—

Put thyself in tune with Him,

Who created Thy body and mind is such aspect of beauty.

Were one to burn one's body in sacrificial fire, cut to grain-weights;

The fuel too of one's limbs in fire kept aflame night and day:

All this equals not devotion to God's Name—

Not this and a million ritual acts.

Were one to get sawn in two,

Sawn from the head down;

Were one to disintegrate this body in Himalayan snows—

Even so the mind's malady of ego would not go.

No ritual sacrifice equals devotion to God's Name—

All have I tested to the full.

Were one to give away in charity walls of gold,

<sup>1</sup>The implication is that all are to be reckoned lowly who serve not God, even through they be of the higher castes.

With steeds and tuskers numerous;  
Were one to add to these lands, herds of kine—  
Still would the mind not be freed of pride and egoism.  
The supreme gift is the heart pierced through with devotion  
to God's Name—  
This holy truth is the Master's blessing.

Many have the disputatious intellect,  
Many more study holy books.<sup>1</sup>  
Numerous such are bonds of the soul;  
Through Divine illumination alone comes liberation.  
All else ranks lower than *knowledge of truth*—  
Higher still is living the truth.

All are noble in God's eyes;  
None is lowly;  
All vessels are fashioned by the same Maker;  
The same light illumines the three worlds:  
True illumination comes through grace—  
This comes from His blessing that is ineffaceable.

Devotees love to consort with devotees;  
In love of God lies true contentment.  
Absorption in God brings knowledge of the inexpressible  
truth<sup>2</sup> of God.  
Those quaffing the ambrosia of God's love find true  
contentment,  
And enter the Court Divine in robes of honour.  
In the heart of true devotees sounds spontaneous Divine  
music:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Original, Vedas.

<sup>2</sup>Original, story, parable (katha).

<sup>3</sup>Literally, music of the harp (kinguri—a simple stringed instrument strummed by yogis).



Few have awareness of this.

The true Preceptor alone brings awakening to the soul.

Prayeth Nanak : May God's Name never leave my soul!

Through absorption in the Word alone comes liberation.

(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, p. 62)

*Re mana aisi Hari siun preet kar jaisi jal kamleh*

My heart, bear such devotion to God as the lotus to water;

Buffeted by the waves it still blooms with love;

Water is its life-source, without which it dies.

My heart! Without devotion not comes liberation.

The Lord fills His devotees inside,

Bestowing on them the store of His devotion.

My heart! bear such devotion to God as the fish to water;

Excess of water is to it joy and peace of its being;<sup>1</sup>

Out of water it lives not for an instant,

Its agony known only to God.

My heart! bear such devotion to God as the chatrik<sup>2</sup> to rain;

With pools overflowing and plains green it still is not content.

One gets what is destined—

Destined as the fruit of actions.

My heart! bear such devotion to God as water to milk,

That bears on itself the rage of fire,

Protecting the milk.

The Lord joins those separated for birth-cycles,

And through purity<sup>3</sup> confers merit.

<sup>1</sup>Literally, body.

<sup>2</sup>A tiny bird reputed to thirst passionately for a particular drop of rain.

<sup>3</sup>Original, truth.

My heart! bear such devotion to God as the chakwi<sup>1</sup> to  
sunlight,  
Spending sleepless nights while away from the light.  
The egoist<sup>2</sup> has no awareness of God;  
The devotee<sup>3</sup> ever abides in His presence.  
The egoist is lost in calculations,  
Though all happens as the Creator wills.

The whole universe would fail to realize His greatness<sup>4</sup>  
His awareness comes from God-given wisdom;  
And from purity<sup>5</sup> alone comes true joy.  
True love formed by the touch of the true Preceptor  
diminishes not;

True illumination brings awareness of the three worlds.  
The Name Immaculate is not cast out of the mind of one  
Who is of this merit the true seeker.

Gone after gambols are the birds that fed full on the  
luxuriant soil;  
Man is an hour's guest in this world;  
Today or tomorrow must he depart.  
Those alone have union who earn His grace,  
Abiding in the Imperishable Fields.  
Without the Preceptor's instruction devotion arises not  
in the heart,  
Nor is filthy ego washed.

<sup>1</sup>A bird in love with the sunlight.

<sup>2</sup>Original manmukh (facing egoward.)

<sup>3</sup>Original, Gurmukh (facing Godward.)

<sup>4</sup>Literally, value.

<sup>5</sup>Original, truth.



Through devotion man beholds his self as a particle of  
 the Divine Essence,<sup>1</sup>  
 Through the Word realizing the true secret.  
 By divine illumination one knows one's true self;  
 All else is of little worth.  
 One in union with God has reached his destination,<sup>2</sup>  
 And is through the Word fulfilled.  
 The egoist is in ignorance,  
 Away from God, buffeted about.  
 Saith Nanak : There is one sole Portal, one sole Abode for  
 man—  
 Nowhere else is his refuge.

(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak, pp. 59-60)

*Tu Prabhu data dan-mati pura hum Thare bhekari jio*

Thou the Bountiful Lord, All-knowing;  
 We the beggars at Thy door.  
 What may I beg of Thee?  
 In this world nothing lasts.  
 Bestow alone the gift of Thy loving devotion.  
 The Lord<sup>3</sup> pervades all creation;<sup>4</sup>  
 In ocean and land His reality operates hidden—  
 The Master's Word has given me a sight of Him.  
 The Eternal Lord in His mercy has manifested the secrets  
 of all three worlds—  
 Has manifested the Absolute, who is unborn, eternal;<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Original, Soham (I am He.)

<sup>2</sup>Literally, what need for one united with God to seek union?

<sup>3</sup>Original, Banawari (Disporter in the Forest) one of Krishna's attributive names.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, in all vessels i.e. creatures.

<sup>5</sup>Literally, is and shall ever be.

Has revealed Him<sup>1</sup> within my self.<sup>2</sup>  
This poor world is bound in life and death;<sup>3</sup>  
Through Maya has it strayed from devotion.  
The true Preceptor may reveal Divine wisdom;  
The deluded misbeliever<sup>4</sup> has forfeited the game of life.  
The true Preceptor has snapped asunder the bonds of  
    ignorance,  
And purified the mind of Maya;  
No more shall now be the cycle of births.  
Saith Nanak: The Formless Lord has taken abode in the mind  
Illuminated by the jewel of Divine wisdom.

(*Raga Sorath, Guru Nanak, pp. 597-98*)

*Beghampura Shahar ko naun*

In the City Joyful  *dwell the Saints of God*,<sup>5</sup>  
Neither suffering nor sorrow is found therein;  
Neither anxiety to pay tribute nor any imposts;  
Neither fear of retribution nor of fall from eminence.  
In this happy land where my dwelling is,  
Abides unending well-being.  
All who therein dwell are blessed with eternal kingship;  
None is there reckoned inferior<sup>6</sup> to any.  
That city knows no decline;  
All dwellers therein are rich and fulfilled.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Original, Murari, still another of Krishna's attributive names.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, in my vessel.

<sup>3</sup>Implies that true liberation lies in annulment of transmigration.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Sakta (see Glossary).

<sup>5</sup>Literally, the name of that city is "City of No Sorrow."

<sup>6</sup>Literally, none is second or third in degree.

<sup>7</sup>Spiritual content and fulfilment is meant.



Unlimited their freedom—

None are alien there;

All in true liberty abide.

Saith Ravidas, the Cobbler emancipated:

Only a denizen of that City reckon I my friend.

(*Raga Gauri, Ravidas, p. 345*)

*Dukh-bhanjan Tera Nam ji dukh-bhanjan Tera Nam*

Lord ! devotion to Thee<sup>1</sup> is dispeller of sorrow,

Annuler of all sorrows.

Cherish ye God's holy wisdom day and night.

Lovely is the consciousness wherein love of God is  
lodged;

The tongue chanting God's praises is not tormented<sup>2</sup> by  
Yama's minions.

Thou life of the universe! Inaccessible, Immeasurable.

Thy mercy<sup>3</sup> I seek—

I who have not thought of serving Thee, of meditating on  
Thee.

By grace of the Lord all sorrow and suffering is vanished;

Not a blast of hot air touches me;

God Himself is turned my Protector.

The Lord God, holy Creator<sup>4</sup>—

Through His grace all blessings have I found.

His servant Nanak is a sacrifice to Him.

(*Raga Gauri, Guru Arjan, P, 218*)

<sup>1</sup>Literally, Thy Name.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, Yama's minions do not approach him.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, shelter.

<sup>4</sup>In this line two synonymous names of God—Narayana and Dayu—have been employed. These are from Indian classical sources.

*Sache Tere khand sache Brahmand*

Holy are the continents created by Thee;

Holy Thy universe.

Holy the worlds and the forms therein.

Holy are Thy doings and all that is in Thy mind.

Holy Thy Ordinance and Thy Writ.

Holy Thy bounty and marks of Thy pleasure.

Eternal King, Thy Might is holy.

Only the pure in spirit have the gift of meditation on Thee:

Those who are reborn are impure through and through.

(*Var Asa, Guru Nanak, p. 463*)

*Basta tooti jhonpari cheer sabh chhinna*

One living in a ruined hovel,

His clothes in tatters ;

Without respect of caste, honoured by none,

Wandering about in wastes;

Without friend or sympathizer,

Without wealth or nobility of bearing,<sup>1</sup>

Without kith or kin—

Should his heart be dyed<sup>2</sup> in devotion to God,<sup>3</sup>

He verily is the king of all creation.

Even the dust of his feet will liberate the soul,<sup>4</sup>

Should God shower grace on him.

(*Var Jaitsari, Guru Arjan, p. 707*)

<sup>1</sup>Original, roop (form) implying beauty.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, drenched.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, God's Name.

<sup>4</sup>Original, mana (mind, consciousness).



## THE TRUE HEROES AND MARTYRS

*Sabahi sebah jinnhee dhiyaya ikk mana*

Those who in the ambrosial early morning hour meditate on  
God

And praise Him with minds concentrated,

Are the real lords among men, engaging in battle when the  
hour arrives.

In the hour after, other ways diverge and the faculties get  
scattered,

Many are fallen into the ocean;<sup>1</sup> are in the water tossing  
beyond extrication;

In the next<sup>2</sup> hour, hunger, thirst and desire raise loud howl.

Even though all food turns to dust, still man loves to indulge  
his palate.

In the hour next<sup>3</sup> man drowns and eyes closed, passes into  
slumber:

With such momentary existence man still enters into strife  
and prolongs contentions.

All hours are propitious if there be love of God in the heart  
day and night.<sup>4</sup>

Nanak, if the Lord be lodged in the heart, that is the true  
ritual bath.

*(Var Majh, Guru Nanak, pp. 145-46)*

<sup>1</sup>Desire is meant.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, third.

<sup>3</sup>The evening of life is implied.

<sup>4</sup>Literally, all eight quarters.

*Man moha ar lobh vikara beeyo cheet na ghaliyo*

He never gave place in his heart to pride,  
Attachment, greed and evil desires;  
Never did his thought stray beyond the Lord;  
His commerce has all been in the jewels of the Lord's Name  
and His qualities—  
Of this merchandise does he carry the load.  
Such is the true servant—true unto death:  
Living, has he ever worshipped the Lord,  
And to the last breath has ever kept Him in his heart.  
Never has he turned his face away from the Lord's command.  
He has lived ever in enjoyment of the Lord's bliss,  
And gone rushing wherever the Lord's command has been.  
In obeying the Lord has he found content in hunger and  
privation,<sup>1</sup>  
And been indifferent to sorrow and joy;  
To the command of the Lord has he ever turned in  
unquestioning obedience.  
By grace of the Lord the servant is blessed in this life and  
next;  
Blessed in life is the servant, saith Nanak,  
Who has realized the Master.

*(Raga Maru, Guru Arjan, p. 1000)*

<sup>1</sup>Original, hunger.



*Bara-Mah (The Seasons)—  
Lyrics of Divine Love*

This great composition in the measure Tukhari, takes in its sweep the span of the year with its change of seasons. In this background, on the analogy of romantic poetry, is voiced the soul's passion for God, the pain of separation and the ecstatic joy of union. This mode was established in medieval Indian poetry. Here the romanticism is transmuted into the passion for God. In the original the rhythms are inexpressibly beautiful.

Listen, my Master ! Man is requited for his deeds of previous births;

Each one gets joy or sorrow: whatever Thou awardest is best.  
Lord, for me absorbed in Thy creation, what hope of liberation?

Verily, even one hour passed without Thee is death:  
In this world am I like the woman bereft of her lord, friendless;  
Grant me through grace a sip of the amrita of Thy Love !  
Absorbed in God's creation, are we forgetting Him, whose worship is noblest of actions.

Nanak is like the woman waiting along the path of her lord.  
Listen to his prayers, Thou Lord of my soul!

The chatrik raises the cry of love; the kokil melts in melody—  
Such pleasures only the woman in her lord's embrace enjoys.  
She alone is in His embrace who pleases Him—such alone is the truly wedded one.

Lodged safe in the Mansion High of Nine Doors,<sup>1</sup> with the Lord she lives.

All creation is Thine, Lord—nothing seek I;

<sup>1</sup>I.e. with the physical faculties directed to living in God's way.

Thy love alone I seek; day and night to revel in Thee.  
In fulfilment with Thee, saith Nanak, the song of the chatrik  
and kokil gives true delight.

Listen, Thou Beloved rippling with charm.  
My mind and body are absorbed in Thee; Thee I cannot  
forget for an instant;  
My soul a sacrifice to Thee—how may I forget Thee for a  
moment even?  
Thy worship is for me the breath of life.  
A stranger in this world, unlinked to it—without God how  
may I live?  
At the Lord's feet I find shelter and rest—  
Thus are my limbs rendered pure.  
Saith Nanak, through God's Word, one gets deep insight, joy  
and poise of mind.

Joyful is the shower of amrita in the soul!  
The Beloved has responded to the call of deep love; fulfilment  
has come:  
The woman stands in wait for the Lord with offerings of  
merits—  
He enters whatever mansion may please Him.  
Others are happy with the Divine spouse; why am I in neglect  
cast away?  
Low are the clouds; pleasing the shower;  
The heart with joy is brimful.  
Saith Nanak: the shower of His Word's amrita falls on the  
heart which He through grace enters.

Lovely is the spring in Chet<sup>1</sup> with humming-bees pleasing;

<sup>1</sup>March-April-May.



In the forests are trees in blossom—I yearn for the Spouse,  
 long-sojourning, to return home.  
 How may the woman find comfort with the Spouse gone away?  
 In the torment of suffering the limbs feel feeble.  
 Pleasing is the kokil's cry among mangoes;  
 How may then pangs of suffering be borne?  
 On blossoming twigs hovers the humming-bee;  
 How may I, mother, bear my pangs at separation, death-like.  
 Saith Nanak: In Chet comes joy to her whose Spouse is with  
 her at home.

Beautiful is Baisakh<sup>1</sup> with twigs draped in loveliness.  
 The woman stands waiting at the door:  
 Enter Lord, in compassion.  
 Enter the house, Beloved; bear me across the water forbidding.  
 Without Thee a half shell's worth am I.  
 Should I meet with Thy approval, get a sight of Thee from  
 the Master with insight;  
 Should I know Thee to be near, inside the soul, know Thy  
 mansion—  
 Who may then assess the greatness of my worth?  
 Saith Nanak: In Baisakh meets His approval one whose mind  
 is absorbed in His thoughts.

Auspicious is Jeth;<sup>2</sup> how may one forget the Beloved in it?  
 Burning oven-like are the plains. The woman thus supplicates:  
 She supplicates, garners her good qualities, so the Lord may  
 approve her for her merits.  
 The Lord transcendent abides in the Mansion Eternal.  
 I may enter it only by His leave.

<sup>1</sup>April-May.

<sup>2</sup>The hot month of May-June. This is considered auspicious despite the burning heat, for in this month too the sight of the Lord may be had.

This humble, helpless one—how may she find joy in the world without God's approval?

Saith Nanak: In Jeth let the woman be absorbed in the Lord, garner merit and seek union by His grace.

Auspicious too is Asadh,<sup>1</sup> despite the sun's heat scorching the firmament,

The earth is in travail, its juices dried up, fire blazing.

Fire sucks up the juices; smouldering torments arise;

Ever does the sun blaze and blaze.

Its chariot moves; frail life seeks the shade; gnats wail in the forest.<sup>2</sup>

She who takes the path with her traveller's pack of demerits shall find sorrow and suffering;

Joy is hers who meditates on the Pure, the Eternal.

Saith Nanak: She whose soul is fixed in God, He is by her in life and in death.

Joy my mind, in Savan;<sup>3</sup> thick clouds pour in the season of rains.

My body and soul yearn for the Beloved, sojourning away from me.

Away from the Spouse, sighs I heave, lightning flashes affright my heart;

On lonely couch I lie grieving in this sorrow, my mother, sorrow bitter as death.

Without the Spouse how may one relish food and sleep?

My vesture<sup>4</sup> is a torment to my limbs.

Saith Nanak: She is the happily wedded wife who is enclosed in the Spouse's embrace.

<sup>1</sup>June-July.

<sup>2</sup>This is one of the touches reminiscent of the early home of the Guru in the forest of Bar.

<sup>3</sup>July-August.

<sup>4</sup>Symbol for the living body.



In Bhadon<sup>1</sup> is the woman lost in illusions:  
 Bursting with youth, her heart is yet in pain.  
 Lakes and plains are inundated; earth is joyful with the rains.  
 Pour clouds in the dark night; how may the bride separated  
 from her Lord find comfort?  
 At night cry frogs and peacocks,  
 The Chatrik raises his note of 'Prio, Prio';<sup>2</sup>  
 Crawl serpents with fangs venomous;  
 Mosquitoes tease; full are the ponds<sup>3</sup>—  
 With all this how may one find joy without God?  
 Saith Nanak: Seek guidance from the Master:<sup>4</sup> Take the path  
 leading to the Lord.

In Asu<sup>5</sup> come back, Beloved, the bride is dying of affliction  
 in suffering;  
 The union Lord, comes by Thy own grace;  
 I am straying into Maya.  
 Lost in illusion, am I abandoned by Thee;  
 Come, now that the water-reeds are in bloom.<sup>6</sup>  
 Gone are hot days; winter comes; my heart is atremble with  
 fear;  
 Everywhere<sup>7</sup> are twigs lush green.  
 I console myself with thinking, slow consummation brings  
 best sweetness.

<sup>1</sup>August-September.

<sup>2</sup>Onomatopoeic sound, imitative of the chatrik's cry. Literally, "Beloved, Beloved".

<sup>3</sup>All these factors add to the bitterness of separation.

<sup>4</sup>Original, Guru. Generally stands for the Supreme Guide for the soul, i.e., God or Divine prompting.

<sup>5</sup>September-October.

<sup>6</sup>Symbolizes the grey touch in the hair—youth sliding into age with the Beloved still away.

<sup>7</sup>Literally, in ten directions.

Saith Nanak: Meet in Asu, Beloved—This is the Master's pledge.

In Katak<sup>1</sup> comes the recompense for deeds as the Lord wills.<sup>2</sup>  
The lamp lighted by God's knowledge burns most steady.

In this lamp, joy in God is the oil;

This lights the woman to union with the Spouse;

Her heart is filled with passion and joy in the Lord.

Demerits bring death of the soul, bring failure;

The nobler death is death of desire through devotion.

Those endowed with devotion to God are ever in poise;

Hope ever buoys them up.

Saith Nanak: Unite me with Thyself, open the gates;

In separation from Thee each hour is months of torment.

Happy is the month of Manghar,<sup>3</sup> filling the heart with  
Divine inspiration.

The woman endowed with merit contemplates God's  
greatness;

Her heart is fixed in the love of the Immutable.

Immutable is the Creator, of perfect wisdom, all-knowing;  
creation is all evanescent.

Enlightenment, contemplation, and His qualities are merged in  
the soul, by His will and grace.

Through hymns, melodies, parables made in God's praise all  
sorrows flee.

Saith Nanak : Beloved of the Lord is the woman whose heart  
is filled with devotion!

<sup>1</sup>October-November.

<sup>2</sup>Katak is the harvest month, symbolizing spiritual poise earned through devotion.

<sup>3</sup>November-December.



In Pokh<sup>1</sup> comes frost sucking up juices from twig and branch.  
 Thou whom I bear ever in heart and soul,  
 Repeat incessantly Thy Name—  
 What keeps Thee away?  
 Heart and soul am I absorbed in Thee—Prop of Creation!  
 In Thy Word lies my joy.  
 All grades of creation—egg-born, mammals, perspiration-  
 born, earth-born—  
 By Thy light are illumined.  
 Grant me a sight of Thee—Merciful, Bounteous!  
 Confer on me Bliss;  
 Grant true wisdom.  
 In Magh<sup>2</sup> am I blessed;  
 In the mind have I seen His shrine.<sup>3</sup>  
 Union with the Beloved has come through His grace;  
 His qualities have I absorbed; He has permeated my Being.  
 The Beloved's qualities have entered my soul;  
 Listen, Thou of loveliness surpassing—  
 To win Thy pleasure is for me ablutions in sacred waters—  
 Ganga, Jamuna, the triple Confluence holy,<sup>4</sup> the seven  
 seas all.  
 Charities, alms-giving, worship—all such blessings come from  
 knowing the Lord Supreme—Eternal, Immutable.  
 Saith Nanak: With Magh comes supreme joy:  
 In worship of the Lord lies ablutions at sixty-eight<sup>5</sup> bathing-  
 places.

<sup>1</sup>December-January.

<sup>2</sup>January-February.

<sup>3</sup>Literally, tirath—a sacred bathing-place.

<sup>4</sup>The confluence at Prayag (Allahabad) held highly sacred.

<sup>5</sup>Traditionally sacred places, sixty-eight in number.

In Phalgun<sup>1</sup> is the heart joyful, attuned to devotion;  
Day and night is it in joy, casting off the ego.  
Illusion have I cast off through love of Thee—  
Show Thy grace, come back home!<sup>2</sup>  
What good to deck myself away from the Spouse, cast off  
from His Mansion?  
Love of the Spouse is all my ornament—jewels, gold, and  
silken robes.  
Saith Nanak: The Lord has bestowed on her union; the  
Woman hath found her Spouse and Home.

Auspicious are the twelve months, nights and days;  
Happy are hours, minutes, and seconds in which the soul is  
absorbed in the Eternal.  
In union with the Lord lies fulfilment—  
He alone effects the union.  
The Lord who has decked the Bride, will also confer His  
love;  
In union with Him lies joy.  
The Spouse's embrace blesses the bridal couch—  
This comes from happy destiny.  
Saith Nanak: She who has love of the Divine Spouse night  
and day, is of eternally blessed matrimony.  
(*Raga Tukhari, Guru Nanak, pp. 1107-1110*)

<sup>1</sup>February-March.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. into the soul.



In the heart of the forest, where the  
 The sun and night is in its  
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## Glossary

*Akal.* Timeless, immortal. This term is central and integral to Sikh tradition and thinking.

*Ages, Four Ages.* In Indian cosmology these are called Yugas, and are, *ad seriatim*, Sati Yuga (the Age of Righteousness), Dwapar, Treta, and Kali-Yuga. The last, Kali-Yuga, is the Age of Sin and spiritual darkness and is now current. Its use is literal as well as metaphorical.

*Amrita.* This term is cognate to "ambrosia" and means "water of immortality." Literally, it means deathless. Mythologically, amrita was one of the fourteen "jewels" churned out of the ocean by the gods and demons. In *Granth Sahib* its use is symbolic, standing for that which confers immortality on the soul—that is, the Divine Word. It also implies the ineffable joy and experience of absorption in God.

*Ashrama.* According to the orthodox Brahminical code, the life of an Aryan must be divided into four stages called ashramas. These are—Brahmcharya (disciplehood), Grihastha (maintaining a household), Vanprastha (retiring for prayer and meditation) and Sannyasa (complete renunciation).

*Babar.* Founder of the Mughal ruling dynasty in India, died 1530.

*Bhagat* (Bhakta). A devotee. This term is applied particularly to the devotees whose compositions have found a place in the *Granth Sahib*.

*Brahm* (Brahman). The Absolute in its "Unattributed" aspect. Also known as Par Brahm (Transcendent Absolute).

*Chandur, Kamsa.* Two evil persons destroyed by Krishna as the incarnation of Vishnu.

*Death.* In the Gurus' teaching it implies not physical death, but spiritual corruption, leading to 'bondage' which is



the bondage of sin and evil. It stands also for the continuing cycle of transmigration, which results in repeated births and deaths, and involvement of the self in lower desires and suffering.

*Dharma.* The principle of righteousness; the urge towards the fulfilment thereof in the universe.

*Duality.* The attitude of mind wherein emphasis is laid on "multiplicity" in the universe as against the realization of all Being as one. Duality is the source of the evils of egoism, avarice, cruelty etc., and the seeker is exhorted through prayer and devotion to transcend duality and to enter into the true mystical experience of non-duality, known by various names.

*Five Evils.* Kama (lust), Krodha (wrath, violence), Lobha (avarice), Moha (illusion, attachment), Ahamkar (egoism).

*Gian or Gyan.* In its Sanskrit form it would be written as Jhan, with the first consonant enunciated in a nasal sound. Literally, knowledge, in its connotation it is parallel with gnosses—esoteric or spiritual knowledge. In this book, it has been rendered generally as realization, illumination, which is the sense it properly yields in the compositions of the Gurus.

*Gita.* The most famous Hindu scripture, containing in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, the Pandava prince, deep moral and spiritual teaching. Its doctrines centre on "disinterested" moral action, the Incarnation Principle, and the three forms of Yoga as Knowledge (Jnan) Devotion (Bhakti) and Action (Karma).

*Guru.* Teacher, preceptor, guide to the spiritual life. In the Sikh tradition, this honorific may not be applied to anyone except Guru Nanak and his nine successors, the *Granth Sahib*, and the Sikh congregation assembled for a religious solemn ceremony.

*Guru-Mukh, Gurmukh.* Literally, one facing Godward. Synonymous with the man of faith.

*Hatha Yoga.* "Yoga by forcible effort," involving certain practices which are part physical and part mental and moral discipline. Hatha-Yoga is centred in pranayam or control of breath, and its successful practice is believed to endow the adept with extraordinary powers and spiritual illumination, through arousing Kundalini or the "Serpent Power."

*Incarnation Principle.* The belief that the Supreme Being, particularly Vishnu, takes birth from time to time to restore righteousness in the universe. Such an incarnation is called Avatar (literally, one descended.) There are ten or according to another count, twenty-four avatars of Vishnu, the most prominent being Rama and Krishna.

*Jivan-Mukta.* One liberated while alive is the individual liberated from the control of the ego, and engaged in furthering God's work on earth.

*Kasumbha.* A yellow flower whose colour is frail, symbolizing weak spiritual attainment or evanescence.

*Mahabharata.* The great epic of Hinduism, telling the story of the war between the Pandavas and the Kurus, besides containing deep moral and spiritual teaching in the form of myth and allegory.

*Maya.* In Indian philosophy, it is the mutable principle, in contradistinction to Brahman, which is eternal. Maya is characterized by its three qualities of *tamas* (darkness, ignorance); *rajas* (passion) and *sattva* (intellect). Maya makes for differentiation and multiplicity, and the end of religious discipline is to view all existence as unity (non-duality). In the Sikh scriptural writings, Maya is the source of spiritual blindness, wrong thinking and the five evils, and is mentioned prejoratively.

*Manmukh.* Literally, ego-facing, or one guided by his impulses.

*Mukti, Moksha.* Literally, liberation—it is the goal of the seeker's endeavour. It consists in the escape from the cycle



of transmigration after death and the control of the lower urges in life.

*Nam.* Literally, name—stands in the Sikh tradition for prayer, meditation, and absorption in God. Other significations attaching to this are: Divine Order or the Peace that absorption in God brings.

*Pandit.* A learned man, a Brahmin, with the implication of one possessing a scholastic, disputatious intellect as against one whose soul is attuned to the Infinite.

*Pauri.* A verse-piece, part of a longer composition. In this book it has been rendered as “stanza” though a pauri is not necessarily part of a uniform structural pattern as implied by stanza.

*Purusha.* Literally, the male. Synonymous with the Creator, as also the Absolute. In Sikh scriptural writings it is pronounced as purakh, and in compounds like Adi-Purakh, Akal-Purakh stands for the Supreme Being who is Primal and Timeless.

*Raga.* A musical measure in the Indian classical tradition. The hymns and other compositions in *Granth Sahib* are arranged according to the musical measures in which these might be sung.

*Ramayana.* The great Hindu epic, narrating the story of Rama.

*Sakta.* Literally, worshipper of Shakti. A widespread cult whose practice includes animal sacrifice and certain acts held immoral; also reprobate or misbeliever.

*Satya, Sati, Satt:* Literally that which exists; implied meaning is eternal, true, holy.

*Shiva.* The third aspect of the Hindu Trinity believed to be the Destroyer.

*Sita.* The consort of Rama, model of the pure woman and faithful wife.

*Veda, Purana, Simriti, Shastra.* Scriptures expounding

various aspects of the Hindu (Brahmanical) faith.

*Vishnu*. One of the three aspects of the Creator, believed to be the Preserver of the universe.

*Yama* (popular form *Jam*). The God of death and retribution; also known as Dharmaraj (the righteous judge).







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